

THE

SECOND EPISTLE GENERAL OF PETER

INTRODUCTION

§ 1. *Genuineness and authenticity of the Epistle.*

It is well known that at an early period of the Christian history there were doubts respecting the canonical authority of the Second Epistle of Peter. The sole ground of the doubt was, whether Peter was the author of it. Eusebius, in the chapter of his ecclesiastical history where he speaks of the New Testament in general, reckons it among the *αντιλεγόμενα*, (*antilegomena*), or those books which were not universally admitted to be genuine; literally, 'those which were spoken against,' b. iii. chap. 25. This does not imply that even he, however, disbelieved its genuineness, but merely that it was numbered among those about which there had not been always entire certainty. Jerome says, 'Peter wrote two epistles, called Catholic; the second of which is denied by many to be his, because of the difference of style from the former.' Origen, before him, had also said, 'Peter, on whom the church is built, has left one epistle [universally] acknowledged. Let it be granted that he also wrote a second. For it is doubted of.' See Lardner, vol. vi., p. 255, Ed. Lond. 1829. Both the epistles of Peter, however, were received as genuine in the fourth and following centuries by all Christians, except the Syrians. The first epistle was never doubted to have been the production of Peter. In regard to the second, as remarked above, it was doubted by some. The principal ground of the doubt, if not the entire ground, was the difference of style between the two, especially in the second chapter, and the fact that the old Syriac translator, though he admitted the Epistle of James, which was also reckoned among the 'doubtful' epistles, did not translate the Second Epistle of Peter. That version was made, probably, at the close of the first century, or in the second; and it is said that it is to be presumed that if this epistle had been then in existence, and had been regarded as genuine, it would also have been translated by him.

It is of importance, therefore, to state briefly the evidence of the genuineness and authenticity of this epistle. In doing this, it is proper to regard the *first* epistle as undoubtedly genuine and canonical, for that was never called in question. That being admitted, the genuineness of this epistle may be argued on the following grounds: (1.) It does not appear to have been *rejected* by any one. It was merely *doubted* whether it was genuine. How far even this *doubt* extended is not mentioned. It is referred to only by Jerome, Origen, and Eusebius, though there is not the least evidence that even *they* had any doubts of its genuineness. They merely state that there were some persons who had doubts on the subject, from the difference of style between this and the former epistle. This fact, indeed, as Wall has remarked, (Critical Notes on the New Testament, pp. 358, 359,) will serve at least to show the care which was evinced in admitting books to be canonical, proving that they were not received without the utmost caution, and that if the slightest doubt existed in the case of any one, it was honestly expressed. (2.) Even all doubt on the subject disappeared as early as the third and

fourth centuries, and the epistle was received as being unquestionably the production of Peter. The effect of the examination in the case was to remove all suspicion, and it has never since been doubted that the epistle was written by Peter; at least, no doubt has arisen, except from the fact stated by Jerome and Origen, that it was not universally admitted to be genuine. (3.) This epistle purports to have been written by the author of the former, and has all the internal marks of genuineness which could exist. (a) It bears the inscription of the name of the same apostle: 'Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ,' chap. i. 1. (b) There is an allusion in chap. i. 14, which Peter only could appropriately make, and which an impostor, or forger of an epistle, would hardly have thought of introducing: 'Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me.' Here, there is an evident reference to the Saviour's prediction of the death of Peter, recorded in John xxi. 18, 19. It is conceivable, indeed, that an adroit forger of an epistle *might* have introduced such a circumstance; but the supposition that it is genuine is much more natural. It is such an allusion as Peter would naturally make; it would have required much skill and tact in another to have introduced it so as not to be easily detected, even if it had occurred to him to personate Peter at all. Would not a forger of an epistle have been likely to mention particularly what *kind* of death was predicted by the Saviour, and not to have made a mere allusion? (c) In chap. i. 16-18, there is another allusion of a similar kind. The writer claims to have been one of the 'eye-witnesses of the majesty' of the Lord Jesus when he was transfigured in the holy mount. It was natural for Peter to refer to this, for he was with him; and he has mentioned it just as one would be likely to do who had actually been with him, and who was writing from personal recollection. A forger of the epistle would have been likely to be more particular, and would have described the scene more minutely, and the place where it occurred, and would have dwelt more on the nature of the evidence furnished there of the Divine mission of the Saviour. (d) In chap. iii. 1, it is stated that this is a second epistle written to the same persons, as a former one had been; and that the writer aimed at substantially the same object in both. Here the plain reference is to the first epistle of Peter, which has always been acknowledged to be genuine. It may be said that one who forged the epistle might have made this allusion. This is true, but it may be doubtful whether he *would* do it. It would have increased the liability to detection, for it would not be easy to imitate the manner, and to carry out the views of the apostle. (4.) To these considerations it may be added, that there is clear internal evidence of another kind to show that it was written by Peter. This evidence, too long to be introduced here, may be seen in Michaelis' Introduction, iv. 349-356. The sum of this internal evidence is, that it would not have been practicable for a writer of the first or second century to have imitated Peter so as to have escaped detection; and that, in general, it is not difficult to detect the books that were forged in imitation of, and in the name of, the apostles.

As to the alleged objection in regard to the difference of the style in the second chapter, see Michaelis, iv. 352-356. Why it was not inserted in the old Syriac version is not known. It is probable that the author of that version was exceedingly cautious, and did not admit any books about which *he* had any doubt. The fact that this was doubted by some, and that these doubts were not removed from his mind, as in the case of the epistle of James, was a good reason for his not inserting it, though it by no means proves that it is not genuine. It came, however, to be acknowledged afterwards by the Syrians as genuine and canonical Ephrem the Syrian, a writer of the fourth century, not only quotes several passages of it, but expressly ascribes it to Peter. Thus, in the second volume of his Greek works, p. 387, he says, 'The blessed Peter, also, the Coryphæus of the apostles, cries, concerning that day, saying, The day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night, in which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.' This is literally quoted (in the Greek) from

2 Pet. iii. 12. See Michaelis, as above, p. 348. And Asseman, in his catalogue of the Vatican Manuscripts, gives an account of a Syriac book of Lessons, to be read, in which is one taken from this epistle. See Michaelis.

These considerations remove all reasonable doubt as to the propriety of admitting this epistle into the canon, as the production of Peter.

§ 2. *The time when the Epistle was written.*

In regard to the *time* when this epistle was written, nothing can be determined with absolute certainty. All that appears on that subject from the epistle itself, is, that at the time of writing it the author was expecting soon to die. Chap. i. 14, 'Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me.' What evidence he had that he was soon to die he has not informed us; nor is it known even what he meant precisely by the word *shortly*. The Greek word (*ταχυν*) is indeed one that would imply that the event was expected not to be far off; but a man would not unnaturally use it who felt that he was growing old, even though he should in fact live several years afterwards. The Saviour (John xxi. 18) did not state to Peter *when* his death would occur, except that it would be when he should be '*old*;' and the probability is, that the fact that he was growing *old* was the only intimation that he had that he was soon to die. Ecclesiastical history informs us that he died at Rome, A.D. 66, in the 12th year of the reign of Nero. See Calmet, *Art. Peter*. Comp. Notes, John xxi. 18, 19. Lardner supposes, from chap. i. 13-15 of this epistle, that this was written not long after the first, as he then says that he 'would not be *negligent* to put them in remembrance of these things.' The two epistles he supposes were written in the year 63 or 64, or at the latest 65. Michaelis supposes it was in the year 64; Calmet that it was in the year of Christ 68, or according to the Vulgar Era, A.D. 65. Probably the year 64 or 65 would not be far from the real date of this epistle. If so, it was, according to Calmet, one year only before the martyrdom of Peter, (A.D. 66,) and six years before the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, A.D. 71.

§ 3. *The persons to whom this Epistle was written, and the place where.*

On this subject there is no room for doubt. In chap. iii. 1, the writer says, 'this second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance.' This epistle was written, therefore, to the same persons as the former. On the question to whom that was addressed, see the Introduction to that epistle, § 1. The epistles were addressed to persons who resided in Asia Minor, and in both they are regarded as in the midst of trials. No certain intimation of the *place* where this epistle was written is given in the epistle itself. It is probable that it was at the same place as the former, as, if it had not been, we may presume that there would have been some reference to the fact that he had changed his residence, or some local allusion which would have enabled us to determine the fact. If he wrote this epistle from Babylon, as he did the former one, (see Intro. to that epistle, § 2,) it is not known why he was so soon removed to Rome, and became a martyr there. Indeed, everything respecting the last days of this apostle is involved in great uncertainty. See the article *Peter* in Calmet's Dictionary. See these questions examined also in Bacon's *Lives of the Apostles*, pp. 258-279.

§ 4.—*The occasion on which the Epistle was written.*

'The first epistle was written in view of the trials which those to whom it was

addressed were then enduring, and the persecutions which they had reason to anticipate, chap. i. 6, 7; iv. 12-19; v. 8-11. The main object of that epistle was to comfort them in their trials, and to encourage them to bear them with a Christian spirit, imitating the example of the Lord Jesus. This epistle appears to have been written, not so much in view of persecutions and bodily sufferings, real or prospective, as in view of the fact that there were teachers of error among them, the tendency of whose doctrine was to turn them away from the gospel. To those teachers of error, and to the dangers to which they were exposed on that account, there is no allusion in the first epistle, and it would seem not to be improbable that Peter had been informed that there were such teachers among them after he had written and despatched that. Or, if he was not thus *informed* of it, it seems to have occurred to him that this was a point of great importance which had not been noticed in the former epistle, and that an effort should be made by apostolic influence and authority to arrest the progress of error, to counteract the influence of the false teachers, and to confirm the Christians of Asia Minor in the belief of the truth. A large part of the epistle, therefore, is occupied in characterising the teachers of error, in showing that they would certainly be destroyed, and in stating the true doctrine in opposition to what they held. It is evident that Peter supposed that the danger to which Christians in Asia Minor were exposed from these errors, was not less than that to which they were exposed from persecution, and that it was of as much importance to guard them from those errors as it was to sustain them in their trials.

The characteristics of the teachers referred to in this epistle, and the doctrines which they taught, were the following :—

(1.) One of the prominent errors was a denial of the Lord that bought them, chap. ii. 1. On the nature of this error, see Notes on that verse.

(2.) They gave indulgence to carnal appetites, and were sensual, corrupt, beastly, lewd, vers. 10, 12, 13, 14, 19. Comp. Jude 4, 8, 16. It is remarkable that so many professed *reformers* have been men who have been sensual and lewd—men who have taken advantage of their character as professed religious teachers, and as *reformers*, to corrupt and betray others. Such reformers often begin with pure intentions, but a constant familiarity with a certain class of vices tends to corrupt the mind, and to awaken in the soul passions which would otherwise have slept; and they fall into the same vices which they attempt to reform. It should be said, however, that many professed reformers are corrupt at heart, and only make use of their pretended zeal in the cause of reformation to give them the opportunity to indulge their base propensities.

(3.) They were disorderly in their views, and '*radical*' in their movements. The tendency of their doctrines was to unsettle the foundations of order and government; to take away all restraint from the indulgence of carnal propensities, and to break up the very foundations of good order in society, chap. ii. 10-12. They 'walked after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness;' they 'despised government' or authority; they were 'presumptuous and self-willed;' they 'were not afraid to speak evil of dignities;' they were like 'natural brute beasts;' they 'spoke evil of the subjects which they did not understand.' It is by no means an uncommon thing for professed reformers to become anti-government men, or to suppose that all the restraints of law stand in their way, and that they must be removed in order to success. They fix the mind on *one* thing to be accomplished. That thing magnifies itself until it fills all the field of vision. Everything which *seems* to oppose their efforts, or to uphold the evil which they seek to remove, they regard as an evil itself; and as the laws and the government of a country often seem to sustain the evil, they become opposed to the government itself, and denounce it as an evil. Instead of endeavouring to enlighten the public mind, and to modify the laws by a course of patient effort, they array themselves against them, and seek to overturn them. For the same reason, also, they suppose that *the church* upholds the evil, and become the deadly foe of all church organizations.

(4.) They were seductive and artful, and adopted a course of teaching that was fitted to beguile the weak, and especially to produce licentiousness of living, chap. ii. 14. They were characterised by 'adulterous' desires; and they practised their arts particularly on the 'unstable,' those who were easily led away by any new and plausible doctrine that went to unsettle the foundations of rigid morality.

(5.) They adopted a pompous mode of teaching, distinguished for sound rather than for sense, and proclaimed themselves to be the special friends of liberal views, and of a liberal Christianity, chap. ii. 17-19. They were like 'wells without water;' 'clouds that were carried about with a tempest;' they spake 'great swelling words of vanity,' and they promised 'liberty' to those who would embrace their views, or freedom from the restraints of bigotry and of a narrow and gloomy religion. This appeal is usually made by the advocates of error.

(6.) They had been professed Christians, and had formerly embraced the more strict views on morals and religion which were held by Christians in general, chap. ii. 20-22. From this, however, they had departed, and had fallen into practices quite as abominable as those of which they had been guilty before their pretended conversion.

(7.) They denied the doctrines which the apostles had stated respecting the end of the world. The *argument* on which they based this denial was the fact that all things continued unchanged as they had been from the beginning, and that it might be inferred from that that the world would be stable, chap. iii. 3, 4. They saw no change in the laws of nature; they saw no indications that the world was drawing to a close, and they *inferred* that laws so stable and settled as those were which existed in nature would continue to operate, and that the changes predicted by the apostles were impossible.

A large part of the epistle is occupied in meeting these errors, and in so portraying the characters of their advocates as to show what degree of reliance was to be placed on their preaching. For a particular view of the manner in which these errors are met, see the analyses to chapters ii. iii.

This epistle is characterised by the same earnest and tender manner as the first, and by a peculiarly 'solemn grandeur of imagery and diction.' The apostle in the last two chapters had to meet great and dangerous errors, and the style of rebuke was appropriate to the occasion. He felt that he himself was soon to die, and, in the prospect of death, his own mind was peculiarly impressed with the solemnity and importance of coming events. He believed that the errors which were broached tended to sap the very foundations of the Christian faith and of good morals, and his whole soul is roused to meet and counteract them. The occasion required that he should state in a solemn manner what *was* the truth in regard to the second advent of the Lord Jesus; what great changes *were* to occur; what the Christian *might* look for hereafter; and his soul kindles with the sublime theme, and he describes in glowing imagery, and in impassioned language, the end of all things, and exhorts them to live as became those who were looking forward to so important events. The practical effect of the whole epistle is to make the mind intensely solemn, and to put it into a position of waiting for the coming of the Lord. On the similarity between this epistle (chap. ii.) and the epistle of Jude, see Introduction to Jude.

SECOND EPISTLE GENERAL OF PETER

CHAPTER I.

SIMON¹ Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like ^a precious

faith with us through the righteousness of ^a God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:

1 Or, *Symeon*. a Ep. 4.5. 2 our God and Saviour.

CHAPTER I.

ANALYSIS OF THE CHAPTER.

THIS chapter comprises the following subjects:—

I. The usual salutations, vers. 1, 2.

II. A statement that all the mercies which they enjoyed pertaining to life and godliness, had been conferred by the power of God, and that he had given them exceeding great and precious promises, vers. 3, 4. It was mainly with reference to these 'promises' that the epistle was written, for they had been assailed by the advocates of error, (chaps. ii. iii.,) and it was important that Christians should see that they *had* the promise of a future life. Comp. chap. iii. 5-14.

III. An exhortation to abound in Christian virtues; to go on making constant attainments in knowledge, and temperance, and patience, and godliness, and brotherly kindness, and charity, vers. 5-9.

IV. An exhortation to endeavour to make their calling and election sure, that so an entrance might be ministered unto them abundantly into the kingdom of the Redeemer, vers. 10, 11.

V. The apostle says that he will endeavour to keep these things before their minds, vers. 12-15. He knew well that they were then established in the truth, (ver. 12,) but he evidently felt that they were in danger of being shaken in the faith by the seductive influence of error, and he says therefore, (vers. 13,) that it was proper, as long as he remained on earth, to endeavour to excite in their minds a lively remembrance of the truths which they had believed;

that the opportunity for his doing this must soon cease, as the period was approaching when he must be removed to eternity, in accordance with the prediction of the Saviour, (ver. 14,) but that he would endeavour to make so permanent a record of his views on these important subjects that they might always have them in remembrance, ver. 15.

VI. A solemn statement that the doctrines which had been taught them, and which they had embraced, were not cunningly-devised fables, but were true, vers. 16-21. In support of this the apostle appeals to the following things:—

(a) The testimony to the fact that Jesus was the Son of God, which Peter had himself heard given on the mount of transfiguration, vers. 17, 18.

(b) Prophecy. These truths, on which he expected them to rely, had been the subject of distinct prediction, and they should be held, whatever were the plausible arguments of the false teachers, vers. 19, 20.

The general object, therefore, of this chapter is to affirm the truth of the great facts of religion, on which their hopes were based, and thus to prepare the way to combat the errors by which these truths were assailed. He first assures them that the doctrines which they held were true, and then, in chaps. ii. and iii., meets the errors by which they were assailed.

1. *Simon Peter*. Marg., *Symeon*. The name is written either *Simon* or *Simeon*—Σίμων or Συμεών. Either word properly means *hearing*; and perhaps, like other names, was at first significant. The first epistle (chap. i. 1) begins simply, 'Peter, an apostle,' &c. The name

2 Grace and peace^a be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.

3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all^b things that

pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us¹ to glory and virtue:^c

^a Da.4.1; 6.25.
1 Or, by.

^b Ps.84.11; 1 Ti.4.8.
c 2 Ti.1.9.

Simon, however, was, his proper name—*Peter*, or *Cephas*, having been added to it by the Saviour, John i. 42. Comp. Matt. xvi. 18. ¶ *A servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ*. In the first epistle the word *apostle* only is used. Paul, however, uses the word *servant* as applicable to himself in Rom. i. 1, and to himself and Timothy in the commencement of the epistle to the Philippians, chap. i. 1. See Notes, Rom. i. 1. ¶ *To them that have obtained like precious faith with us*. With us who are of Jewish origin. This epistle was evidently written to the same persons as the former, (Intro., § 3,) and that was intended to embrace many who were of Gentile origin. Notes, 1 Pet. i. 1. The apostle addresses them all now, whatever was their origin, as heirs of the common faith, and as in all respects brethren. ¶ *Through the righteousness of God*. Through the method of justification which God has adopted. See this fully explained in the Notes on Rom. i. 17.

[The original is *δικαιοσύνη*, IN the righteousness, &c., which makes the righteousness the *object* of faith. We cannot but regard the author's rendering of the famous phrase here used by Peter, and by Paul, Rom. i. 17; iii. 21, as singularly unhappy. That Archbishop Newcome used it and the Socinian version adopted it, would not make us reject it; but when the apostles state *specially* the GROUND of justification, why should they be made to speak *indefinitely* of its general 'plan,' or method. The rendering of Stuart, viz., 'justification of God,' is not more successful; it confounds the *thing itself* with the *ground* of it. Why not prefer the apostle's own words to any change or periphrasis? See Supplementary Note, Rom. i. 17.]

¶ *God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*. Marg., *our God and Saviour*. The Greek will undoubtedly *bear* the construction given in the margin; and if this be the true rendering, it furnishes an argument for the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Bishop Middleton, Slade, Valpy, Bloomfield, and others, contend that this is the true and proper render-

ing. It is doubted, however, by Wetstein, Grotius, and others. Erasmus supposes that it may be taken in either sense. The construction, though certainly not a violation of the laws of the Greek language, is not so free from all doubt as to make it proper to use the passage as a proof-text in an argument for the divinity of the Saviour. It is easier to prove the doctrine from other texts that are plain, than to show that this *must* be the meaning here.

2. *Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord*. That is, grace and peace *abound* to us, or may be expected to be conferred on us abundantly, if we have a true knowledge of God and of the Saviour. Such a knowledge constitutes true religion: for in that we find *grace*—the grace that pardons and sanctifies; and *peace*—peace of conscience, reconciliation with God, and calmness in the trials of life. See Notes, John xvii. 3.

3. *According as his divine power hath given unto us*. All the effects of the gospel on the human heart are, in the Scriptures, traced to the *power* of God. See Notes, Rom. i. 16. There are no moral means which have ever been used that have such *power* as the gospel; none through which God has done so much in changing the character and affecting the destiny of man. ¶ *All things that pertain unto life and godliness*. The reference here in the word *life* is undoubtedly to the life of religion; the life of the soul imparted by the gospel. The word *godliness* is synonymous with piety. The phrase 'according as' (*ὡς*) seems to be connected with the sentence in ver. 5, 'Forasmuch as he has conferred on us these privileges and promises connected with life and godliness, we are bound, in order to obtain all that is implied in these things, to give all diligence to add to our faith, knowledge,' &c. ¶ *Through the knowledge of him*. By a proper acquaintance

4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises;^a that by these ye might be

^a 2 Co.7.1.

with him, or by the right kind of knowledge of him. Notes, John xvii. 3. ¶ *That hath called us to glory and virtue.* Margin, *by.* Greek, 'through glory,' &c. Doddridge supposes that it means that he has done this 'by the strengthening virtue and energy of his spirit.' Rosenmüller renders it, 'by glorious benignity.' Dr. Robinson (*Lex.*) renders it, 'through a glorious display of his efficiency.' The objection which any one feels to this rendering arises solely from the word *virtue*, from the fact that we are not accustomed to apply that word to God. But the original word (*ἀρετή*) is not as limited in its signification as the English word is, but is rather a word which denotes a good quality or excellence of any kind. In the ancient classics it is used to denote manliness, vigour, courage, valour, fortitude; and the word would rather denote *energy* or *power* of some kind, than what we commonly understand by virtue, and would be, therefore, properly applied to the *energy* or *efficiency* which God has displayed in the work of our salvation. Indeed, when applied to moral excellence at all, as it is in ver. 5, of this chapter, and often elsewhere, it is perhaps with a reference to the *energy, boldness, vigour, or courage* which is evinced in overcoming our evil propensities, and resisting allurements and temptations. According to this interpretation, the passage teaches that it is *by a glorious Divine efficiency* that we are called into the kingdom of God.

4. *Whereby.* *Δι ὧν.* 'Through which'—in the plural number, referring either to the *glory* and *virtue* in the previous verse, and meaning that it was by that glorious Divine efficiency that these promises were given; or, to all the things mentioned in the previous verse, meaning that it was through those arrangements, and in order to their completion, that these great and glorious promises were made. The promises given are in connection with the plan of securing 'life and godliness,' and are a part of the gracious arrangements for that ob-

partakers^b of the divine nature, having escaped^c the corruption that is in the world through lust.

^b He.19.10.

^c 2 Pe.2.18,20.

ject. ¶ *Exceeding great and precious promises.* A *promise* is an assurance on the part of another of some good for which we are dependent on him. It implies, (1,) that the thing is in his power; (2,) that he may bestow it or not, as he pleases; (3,) that we cannot infer from any process of reasoning that it is his purpose to bestow it on us; (4,) that it is a favour which we can obtain *only* from him, and not by any independent effort of our own. The promises here referred to are those which pertain to salvation. Peter had in his eye probably all that then had been revealed which contemplated the salvation of the people of God. They are called 'exceeding great and precious,' because of their value in supporting and comforting the soul, and of the honour and felicity which they unfold to us. The promises referred to are doubtless those which are made in connection with the plan of salvation revealed in the gospel, for there are no *other* promises made to man. They refer to the pardon of sin; strength, comfort, and support in trial; a glorious resurrection; and a happy immortality. If we look at the greatness and glory of the objects, we shall see that the promises are in fact exceedingly precious; or if we look at their influence in supporting and elevating the soul, we shall have as distinct a view of their value. The promise goes beyond our reasoning powers; enters a field which we could not otherwise penetrate—the distant future; and relates to what we could not otherwise obtain. All that we need in trial, is the simple *promise* of God that he will sustain us; all that we need in the hour of death, is the assurance of our God that we shall be happy for ever. What would this world be without a *promise*? How impossible to penetrate the future! How dark that which is to come would be! How bereft we should be of consolation! The past has gone, and its departed joys and hopes can never be recalled to cheer us again; the present may be an hour of pain, and sadness, and disappoint-

ment, and gloom, with perhaps not a ray of comfort; the future only opens fields of happiness to our vision, and everything there depends on the will of God, and all that we can know of it is from his promises. Cut off from these, we have no way either of obtaining the blessings which we desire, or of ascertaining that they can be ours. For the promises of God, therefore, we should be in the highest degree grateful, and in the trials of life we should cling to them with unwavering confidence as the only things which can be an anchor to the soul. ¶ *That by these.* Greek, 'through these.' That is, these constitute the basis of your hopes of becoming partakers of the divine nature. Comp. Notes on 2 Cor. vii. 1. ¶ *Partakers of the divine nature.* This is a very important and a difficult phrase. An expression somewhat similar occurs in Heb. xii. 10: 'That we might be partakers of his holiness.' See Notes on that verse. In regard to the language here used, it may be observed, (1.) that it is directly contrary to all the notions of *Pantheism*—or the belief that all things are *now* God, or a part of God—for it is said that the object of the promise is, that we '*may become* partakers of the divine nature,' not that we are now. (2.) It cannot be taken in so literal a sense as to mean that we can ever partake of the divine *essence*, or that we shall be *absorbed* into the divine nature so as to lose our individuality. This idea is held by the Buddhists; and the perfection of being is supposed by them to consist in such absorption, or in losing their own individuality, and their ideas of happiness are graduated by the approximation which may be made to that state. But this cannot be the meaning here, because (a) it is in the nature of the case impossible. There must be for ever an essential difference between a created and an uncreated mind. (b) This would argue that the Divine Mind is not perfect. If this absorption was necessary to the completeness of the character and happiness of the Divine Being, then he was imperfect before; if before perfect, he would *not* be after the absorption of an infinite number of finite and imperfect minds. (c) In all

the representations of heaven in the Bible, the idea of *individuality* is one that is prominent. *Individuals* are represented everywhere as worshippers there, and there is no intimation that the separate existence of the redeemed is to be absorbed and lost in the essence of the Deity. Whatever is to be the condition of man hereafter, he is to have a separate and individual existence, and the *number* of intelligent beings is never to be diminished either by annihilation, or by their being united to any other spirit so that they shall become *one*. The reference then, in this place, must be to the *moral* nature of God; and the meaning is, that they who are renewed become participants of the same *moral* nature; that is, of the same views, feelings, thoughts, purposes, principles of action. Their nature as they are born, is sinful, and prone to evil, (Eph. ii. 3;) their nature as they are born again, becomes like that of God. They are made *like* God; and this resemblance will increase more and more for ever, until in a much higher sense than can be true in this world, they may be said to have become 'partakers of the divine nature.' Let us remark, then, (a) that *man* only, of all the dwellers on the earth, is capable of rising to this condition. The nature of all the other orders of creatures here below is incapable of any such transformation that it can be said that they become 'partakers of the divine nature.' (b) It is impossible now to estimate the degree of approximation to which man may yet rise towards God, or the exalted sense in which the term may yet be applicable to him; but the prospect before the believer in this respect is most glorious. Two or three circumstances may be referred to here as mere *hints* of what we may yet be: (1.) Let any one reflect on the amazing advances made by himself since the period of infancy. But a few, very few years ago, he knew *nothing*. He was in his cradle, a poor, helpless infant. He knew not the use of eyes, or ears, or hands, or feet. He knew not the name or use of anything, not even the name of father or mother. He could neither walk, nor talk, nor creep. He knew not even that a candle would burn him if he put his finger there. He

5 And beside this, giving all dili-

α Phil.4.8.

δ Phil.1.9.

knew not how to grasp or hold a rattle, or what was its sound, or whence that sound or any other sound came. Let him think what he is at twenty, or forty, in comparison with this; and then, if his improvement in every similar number of years hereafter *should* be equal to this, who can tell the height to which he will rise? (2.) We are here limited in our own powers of learning about God or his works. We become acquainted with him *through* his works—by means of *the senses*. But by the appointment of this method of becoming acquainted with the external world, the design seems to have been to accomplish a double work quite contradictory—one to help us, and the other to hinder us. One is to give us the means of communicating with the external world—by the sight, the hearing, the smell, the touch, the taste; the other is to shut us out from the external world, except by these. The body is a *casement*, an enclosure, a prison in which the soul is incarcerated, from which we can *look out* on the universe only through these organs. But suppose, as may be the case in a future state, there shall be *no* such enclosure, and that the whole soul may look directly on the works of God—on spiritual existences, on God himself—who can then calculate the height to which man may attain in becoming a ‘partaker of the divine nature?’ (3.) We shall have an *eternity* before us to grow in knowledge, and in holiness, and in conformity to God. Here, we attempt to climb the hill of knowledge, and having gone a few steps—while the top is still lost in the clouds—we lie down and die. We look at a few things; become acquainted with a few elementary principles; make a little progress in virtue, and then all our studies and efforts are suspended, and ‘we fly away.’ In the future world we shall have an *eternity* before us to make progress in knowledge, and virtue, and holiness, uninterrupted; and who can tell in what exalted sense it may yet be true that we shall be ‘partakers of the divine nature,’ or what attainments we may yet make? ¶ *Having escaped the cor-*

ruption that is in the world through lust. The world is full of corruption. It is the design of the Christian plan of redemption to deliver us from that, and to make us holy; and the means by which we are to be made like God, is by rescuing us from its dominion.

5. *And beside this.* Καὶ αὐτὸ τοῦτο. Something here is necessary to be understood in order to complete the sense. The *reference* is to ver. 3; and the connection is, ‘since (ver. 3) God has given us these exalted privileges and hopes, *in respect to this*, (κατὰ or διὰ being understood,) or as a *consequence* fairly flowing from this, we ought to give all diligence that we may make good use of these advantages, and secure as high attainments as we possibly can. We should add one virtue to another, that we may reach the highest possible elevation in holiness.’ ¶ *Giving all diligence.* Greek, ‘Bringing in all zeal or effort.’ The meaning is, that we ought to make this a distinct and definite object, and to apply ourselves to it as a thing to be accomplished. ¶ *Add to your faith virtue.* It is not meant in this verse and the following that we are to endeavour particularly to add these things one to another *in the order* in which they are specified, or that we are to seek first to have faith, and then to add to *that* virtue, and then to add knowledge to virtue rather than to faith, &c. The *order* in which this is to be done, the *relation* which one of these things may have to another, is not the point aimed at; nor are we to suppose that any other order of the words would not have answered the purpose of the apostle as well, or that any one of the virtues specified would not sustain as direct a relation to any other, as the one which he has specified. The design of the apostle is to say, in an emphatic manner, that we are to strive to possess and exhibit all these virtues; in other words, we are not to content ourselves with a single grace, but are to cultivate *all* the virtues, and to endeavour to make our piety complete in all the relations which we sustain. The essential idea in the passage before us seems to be, that in our

6 And to knowledge temperance;^a and to temperance patience;^b and to patience godliness;^c

7 And to godliness brotherly kindness;^d and to brotherly kindness charity.^e

8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make *you that ye shall* neither be ¹barren nor unfruitful ²in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

^a 1 Co. 9. 25. ^b Ja. 1. 4. ^c 1 Ti. 4. 7.
^d Jn. 13. 34, 35. ^e 1 Co. 13. 1-3. 1 *id.* ^f Jn. 15. 2-6.

religion we are not to be satisfied with one virtue, or one class of virtues, but that there is to be (1,) a diligent CULTIVATION of our virtues, since the graces of religion are as susceptible of cultivation as any other virtues; (2,) that there is to be PROGRESS made from one virtue to another, seeking to reach the highest possible point in our religion; and, (3,) that there is to be an ACCUMULATION of virtues and graces—or we are not to be satisfied with one class, or with the attainments which we can make in one class. We are to endeavour to *add on* one after another until we have become possessed of all. Faith, perhaps, is mentioned first, because that is the foundation of all Christian virtues; and the other virtues are required to be added to that, because, from the place which faith occupies in the plan of justification, many might be in danger of supposing that if they had that they had all that was necessary. Comp. James ii. 14, seq. In the Greek word rendered '*add*,' (ἐπιχρηματίζουσι,) there is an allusion to a *chorus-leader* among the Greeks, and the sense is well expressed by Doddridge: 'Be careful to accompany that belief with all the lovely train of attendant graces.' Or, in other words, 'let faith lead on as at the head of the choir or the graces, and let all the others follow in their order.' The word here rendered *virtue* is the same which is used in ver. 3; and there is included in it, probably, the same general idea which was noticed there. All the things which the apostle specifies, unless *knowledge* be an exception, are *virtues* in the sense in which that word is commonly used; and it can hardly be supposed that the apostle here meant to use a *general* term which would include all of the others. The probability is, therefore, that by the word here he has reference to the common meaning of the Greek word, as referring to manliness, courage,

vigour, energy; and the sense is, that he wished them to evince whatever firmness or courage might be necessary in maintaining the principles of their religion, and in enduring the trials to which their faith might be subjected. True *virtue* is not a tame and passive thing. It requires great energy and boldness, for its very essence is firmness, manliness, and independence. ¶ *And to virtue knowledge.* The knowledge of God and of the way of salvation through the Redeemer, ver. 3. Comp. chap. iii. 8. It is the duty of every Christian to make the highest possible attainments in *knowledge*.

6. *And to knowledge temperance.* On the meaning of the word *temperance*, see Notes on Acts xxiv. 25, and 1 Cor. ix. 25. The word here refers to the mastery over all our evil inclinations and appetites. We are to allow none of them to obtain control over us. See Notes on 1 Cor. vi. 12. This would include, of course, abstinence from intoxicating drinks; but it would also embrace *all* evil passions and propensities. Everything is to be confined within proper limits, and to no propensity of our nature are we to give indulgence beyond the limits which the law of God allows. ¶ *And to temperance patience.* Notes on James i. 4. ¶ *And to patience godliness.* True piety. Notes on ver. 3. Comp. 1 Tim. ii. 2; iii. 16; iv. 7. 8; vi. 3, 5, 6, 11.

7. *And to godliness brotherly kindness.* Love to Christians as such. See Notes on John xiii. 34; Heb. xiii. 1. ¶ *And to brotherly kindness charity.* Love to all mankind. There is to be a peculiar affection for Christians as of the same family; there is to be a true and warm love, however, for all the race. See Notes on 1 Cor. xiii.

8. *For if these things be in you, and abound.* If they are in you in rich abundance; if you are eminent for these

9 But he that lacketh these things is blind,^a and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

10 Wherefore the rather, brethren,

give diligence^b to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

^a 1 Jn. 2.9-11. ^b 3 Ps. 3.17. ^c 1 Jn. 2.19; Ec. 22.14.

things. ¶ *They make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful.* They will show that you are not barren or unfruitful. The word rendered *barren*, is, in the margin, *idle*. The word *idle* more accurately expresses the sense of the original. The meaning is, that if they evinced these things, it would show (1) that they were diligent in cultivating the Christian graces, and (2) that it was not a vain thing to attempt to grow in knowledge and virtue. Their efforts would be followed by such happy results as to be an encouragement to exertion. In nothing is there, in fact, more encouragement than in the attempt to become eminent in piety. On no other efforts does God smile more propitiously than on the attempt to secure the salvation of the soul and to do good. A small part of the exertions which men put forth to become rich, or learned, or celebrated for oratory or heroism, would secure the salvation of the soul. In the former, also, men often fail; in the latter, never.

9. *But he that lacketh these things is blind.* He has no clear views of the nature and the requirements of religion. ¶ *And cannot see afar off.* The word used here, which does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament, (*μωραλζω*), means to shut the eyes; i. e., to contract the eyelids, to blink, to twinkle, as one who cannot see clearly, and hence to be *near-sighted*. The meaning here is, that he is like one who has an indistinct vision; one who can see only the objects that are near him, but who has no correct apprehension of objects that are more remote. He sees but a little way into the true nature and design of the gospel. He does not take those large and clear views which would enable him to comprehend the whole system at a glance. ¶ *And hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.* He does not remember the obligation which grows out of the fact that a system has been devised to purify the heart, and that he

has been so far brought under the power of that system as to have his sins forgiven. If he had any just view of that, he would see that he was under obligation to make as high attainments as possible, and to cultivate to the utmost extent the Christian graces.

10. *Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence.* Ver. 5. 'In view of these things, give the greater diligence to secure your salvation.' The considerations on which Peter based this appeal seem to have been the fact that such promises are made to us, and such hopes held out before us; the degree of uncertainty thrown over the whole matter of our personal salvation by low attainments in the divine life, and the dreadful condemnation which will ensue if in the end it shall be found that we are destitute of all real piety. The general thought is, that religion is of sufficient importance to claim our highest diligence, and to arouse us to the most earnest efforts to obtain the assurance of salvation. ¶ *To make your calling and election sure.* On the meaning of the word *calling*, see Notes on Eph. iv. 1. On the meaning of the word *election*, see Notes on Rom. ix. 11; 1 Thess. i. 4. Comp. Eph. i. 5. The word rendered election here, (*ἐκλογή*), occurs only in this place and in Acts ix. 15; Rom. ix. 11; xi. 5, 7, 28; 1 Thess. i. 4; though corresponding words from the same root denoting the *elect*, to *elect*, to *choose*, frequently occur. The word here used means *election*, referring to the act of God, by which those who are saved are *chosen* to eternal life. As the word *calling* must refer to the act of God, so the word *election* must; for it is God who both *calls* and *chooses* those who shall be saved. The word in the Scriptures usually refers to the actual *choosing* of those who shall be saved; that is, referring to the time when they, in fact, *become* the children of God, rather than to the *purpose* of God that it shall be done; but still there must have been an

eternal purpose, for God makes no choice which he did not always intend to make. The word *sure*, means firm, steadfast, secure, (*ββαιαν*.) Here the reference must be to *themselves*; that is, they were so to act as to make it certain to themselves that they had been chosen, and were truly called into the kingdom of God. It cannot refer to God, for no act of theirs could make it more certain on his part, if they had been actually chosen to eternal life. Still, God everywhere treats men as moral agents; and what may be absolutely certain in his mind from the mere purpose that it *shall* be so, is to be made certain to us only by evidence, and in the free exercise of our own powers. The meaning here is, that they were to obtain such evidences of personal piety as to put the question whether they were *called* and *chosen*, so far as their own minds were concerned, to rest; or so as to have undoubted evidence on this point. The Syriac, the Vulgate, and some Greek manuscripts, insert here the expression 'by your good works;' that is, they were to make their calling *sure* by their good works, or by holy living. This clause, as Calvin remarks, is not authorized by the best authority, but it does not materially affect the sense. It was undoubtedly by their 'good works' in the sense of holy living, or of lives consecrated to the service of God, that they were to obtain the evidence that they were true Christians; that is, that they had been really called into the kingdom of God, for there is nothing else on which we can depend for such evidence. God has given no assurance to us by name that he intends to save us. We can rely on no voice, or vision, or new revelation, to prove that it is so. No internal feeling of itself, no raptures, no animal excitement, no confident persuasion in our own minds that we are elected, can be proof in the case; and the only certain *evidence* on which we can rely is that which is found in a life of sincere piety. In view of the important statement of Peter in this verse, then, we may remark, (1.) that he believed in the doctrine of election, for he uses language which obviously implies this, or such as they are accustomed to use who believe the doctrine. (2.) The fact that God has chosen

those who shall be saved, does not make our own efforts unnecessary to make that salvation *sure* to us. It can be made *sure* to our own minds only by our own exertions; by obtaining evidence that we are in fact the children of God. There can be no evidence that salvation will be ours, unless there is a holy life; that is, unless there is true religion. Whatever may be the secret purpose of God in regard to us, the only evidence that we have that we shall be saved is to be found in the fact that we are sincere Christians, and are honestly endeavouring to do his will. (3.) It is possible to make our calling and election *sure*; that is, to have such evidence on the subject that the mind shall be calm, and that there will be no danger of deception. If we can determine the point that we are *in fact* true Christians, that settles the matter—for then the unfulfilling promise of God meets us that we shall be saved. In making our salvation *sure* to our own minds, if we are in fact true Christians, we have not to go into an argument to prove that we have sufficient strength to resist temptation, or that we shall be able in any way to keep ourselves. All that matter is settled by the promise of God, that if we are Christians we shall be kept *by him* to salvation. The only question that is to be settled is, whether we are in fact true Christians, and all beyond that may be regarded as determined immutably. But assuredly it is possible for a man to determine the question whether he is or is not a true Christian. (4.) If it *can* be done, it *should* be. Nothing is more important for us to do than this; and to this great inquiry we should apply our minds with unflinching diligence, until by the grace of God we can say that there are no lingering doubts in regard to our final salvation. ¶ *For if ye do these things.* The things referred to in the previous verses. If you use all diligence to make as high attainments as possible in piety, and if you practise the virtues demanded by religion, vers. 5-7. ¶ *Ye shall never fall.* You shall never fall into perdition. That is, you shall certainly be saved.

11. *For so an entrance.* In this manner you shall be admitted into the kingdom of God. ¶ *Shall be ministered*

11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

12 Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remem-

brance of these things, though ye know *them*, and be established in the present truth.

13 Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir ^a

a 2 Pe.3.1.

unto you. The same Greek word is here used which occurs in ver. 5, and which is there rendered *add*. See Notes on that verse. There was not improbably in the mind of the apostle a recollection of that word; and the sense may be, that 'if they would lead on the virtues and graces referred to in their beautiful order, those graces would attend them in a radiant train to the mansions of immortal glory and blessedness.' See Doddridge *in loc.* ¶ *Abundantly*. Gr., *richly*. That is, the most ample entrance would be furnished; there would be no doubt about their admission there. The gates of glory would be thrown wide open, and they, adorned with all the bright train of graces, would be admitted there. ¶ *Into the everlasting kingdom, &c.* Heaven. It is here called *everlasting*, not because the Lord Jesus shall preside over it as the Mediator, (comp. Notes, 1 Cor. xv. 24.) but because, in the form which shall be established when 'he shall have given it up to the Father,' it will endure for ever. The empire of God which the Redeemer shall set up over the souls of his people shall endure to all eternity. The object of the plan of redemption was to secure their allegiance to God, and that will never terminate.

12. *Wherefore I will not be negligent*. That is, in view of the importance of these things. ¶ *To put you always in remembrance*. To give you the means of having them always in remembrance; to wit, by his writings. ¶ *Though ye know them*. It was of importance for Peter, as it is for ministers of the gospel now, to bring known truths to remembrance. Men are liable to forget them, and they do not exert the influence over them which they ought. It is the office of the ministry not only to impart to a people truths which they did not know before, but a large part of their work is to bring to recollection well-known truths, and to seek that they may exert

a proper influence on the life. Amidst the cares, the business, the amusements, and the temptations of the world, even true Christians are prone to forget them; and the ministers of the gospel render them an essential service, even if they should do nothing more than remind them of truths which are well understood, and which they have known before. A pastor, in order to be useful, need not always aim at originality, or deem it necessary always to present truths which have never been heard of before. He renders an essential service to mankind who *reminds* them of what they know but are prone to forget, and who endeavours to impress plain and familiar truths on the heart and conscience, for these truths are most important for man. ¶ *And be established in the present truth*. That is, the truth which is with you, or which you have received.—*Rob. Lex.* on the word *ἀρρίπτει*. The apostle did not doubt that they were now confirmed in the truth as far as it had been made known to them, but he felt that amidst their trials, and especially as they were liable to be drawn away by false teachers, there was need of reminding them of the grounds on which the truths which they had embraced rested, and of adding his own testimony to confirm their Divine origin. Though we may be very firm in our belief of the truth, yet there is a propriety that the grounds of our faith should be stated to us frequently, that they may be always in our remembrance. The mere fact that at present we are firm in the belief of the truth, is no certain evidence that we shall always continue to be; nor because we are thus firm should we deem it improper for our religious teachers to state the grounds on which our faith rests, or to guard us against the arts of those who would attempt to subvert our faith.

13. *Yea, I think it meet*. I think it becomes me as an apostle. It is my

you up, by putting *you* in remembrance;

14 Knowing that shortly I must put off *this* my tabernacle, even as

a Ja. 21. 18, 19.

appropriate duty; a duty which is felt the more as the close of life draws near. ¶ *As long as I am in this tabernacle.* As long as I live; as long as I am in the body. The body is called a tabernacle, or *tent*, as that in which the soul resides for a little time. See Notes, 2 Cor. v. 1. ¶ *To stir you up, by putting you in remembrance.* To excite or arouse you to a diligent performance of your duties; to keep up in your minds a lively sense of Divine things. Religion becomes more important to a man's mind always as he draws near the close of life, and feels that he is soon to enter the eternal world.

14. *Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle.* That I must die. This he knew, probably, because he was growing old, and was reaching the outer period of human life. It does not appear that he had any express revelation on the point. ¶ *Even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.* See Notes, John xxi. 18, 19. This does not mean that he had any new revelation on the subject, showing him that he was soon to die, as many of the ancients supposed; but the idea is, that the time drew near when he was to die *in the manner* in which the Saviour had told him that he would. He had said (John xxi. 18) that this would occur when he should be 'old,' and as he was now becoming old, he felt that the predicted event was drawing near. Many years had now elapsed since this remarkable prophecy was uttered. It would seem that Peter had never doubted the truth of it, and during all that time he had had before him the distinct assurance that he must die by violence; by having 'his hands stretched forth;' and by being conveyed by force to some place of death to which he would not of himself go, (John xxi. 18;) but, though the prospect of such a death must have been painful, he never turned away from it; never sought to abandon his Master's cause;

our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.^a

15 Moreover, I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.

and never doubted that it would be so. This is one of the few instances that have occurred in the world, where a man knew distinctly, long beforehand, what would be the manner of his own death, and where he could have it constantly in his eye. We cannot foresee this in regard to ourselves, but we may learn to feel that death is not far distant, and may accustom ourselves to think upon it in whatever manner it may come upon us, as Peter did, and endeavour to prepare for it. Peter would naturally seek to prepare himself for death in the particular form in which he knew it would occur to him; we should prepare for it in whatever way it may occur to us. The subject of crucifixion would be one of peculiar interest to him; to us death itself should be the subject of peculiar interest—the manner is to be left to God. Whatever may be the signs of its approach, whether sickness or grey hairs, we should meditate much upon an event so solemn to us; and as these indications thicken we should be more diligent, as Peter was, in doing the work that God has given us to do. Our days, like the fabled Sybil's leaves, become more valuable as they are diminished in number; and as the 'inevitable hour' draws nearer to us, we should labour more diligently in our Master's cause, gird our loins more closely, and trim our lamps. Peter thought of the cross, for it was such a death that he was led to anticipate. Let us think of the bed of languishing on which we may die, or of the blow that may strike us suddenly down in the midst of our way, calling us without a moment's warning into the presence of our Judge.

15. *Moreover, I will endeavour.* I will leave such a permanent record of my views on these subjects that you may not forget them. He meant not only to declare his sentiments orally, but to record them that they might be

perused when he was dead. He had such a firm conviction of the truth and value of the sentiments which he held, that he would use all the means in his power that the church and the world should not forget them. ¶ *After my decease.* My *exode*, (*ἐξόδος*;) my journey out; my departure; my exit from life. This is not the usual word to denote death, but is rather a word denoting that he was going on a journey *out* of this world. He did not expect to cease to be, but he expected to go on his travels to a distant abode. This idea runs through all this beautiful description of the feelings of Peter as he contemplated death. Hence he speaks of taking down the 'tabernacle' or *tent*, the temporary abode of the soul, that his spirit might be removed to another place, (ver. 13;) and hence he speaks of an *exode* from the present life—a journey to another world. This is the true notion of death; and if so, two things follow from it: (1.) we should make preparation for it, as we do for a journey, and the more in proportion to the distance that we are to travel, and the time that we are to be absent; and (2.) when the preparation is made, we should not be unwilling to enter on the journey, as we are not now when we are prepared to leave our homes to visit some remote part of our own country, or a distant land. ¶ *To have these things always in remembrance.* By his writings. We may learn from this, (1.) that when a Christian grows old, and draws near to death, his sense of the value of Divine truth by no means diminishes. As he approaches the eternal world; as from its borders he surveys the past, and looks on to what is to come; as he remembers what benefit the truths of religion have conferred on him in life, and sees what a miserable being he would now be if he had no such hope as the gospel inspires; as he looks on the whole influence of those truths on his family and friends, on his country and the world, their value rises before him with a magnitude which he never saw before, and he desires most earnestly that they should be seen and embraced by all. A man on the borders of eternity is likely to have a very deep sense of the value of the Christian religion; and is he not then in favourable circumstances

to estimate this matter aright? Let any one place himself in imagination in the situation of one who is on the borders of the eternal world, as all in fact soon will be, and can he have any doubt about the value of religious truth? (2.) We may learn from what Peter says here, that it is the *duty* of those who are drawing near to the eternal world, and who are the friends of religion, to do all they can that the truths of Christianity 'may be always had in remembrance.' Every man's experience of the value of religion, and the results of his examination and observation, should be regarded as the property of the world, and should not be lost. As he is about to die, he should seek, by all the means in his power, that those truths should be perpetuated and propagated. This duty may be discharged by some in counsels offered to the young, as they are about to enter on life, giving them the results of their own experience, observation, and reflections on the subject of religion; by some, by an example so consistent that it cannot be soon forgotten—a legacy to friends and to the world of much more value than accumulated silver and gold; by some, by solemn warnings or exhortations on the bed of death; in other cases, by a recorded experience of the conviction and value of religion, and a written defence of its truth, and illustration of its nature—for every man who can write a good book owes it to the church and the world to do it; by others, in leaving the means of publishing and spreading good books in the world. He does a good service to his own age, and to future ages, who records the results of his observations and his reflections in favour of the truth in a book that shall be readable; and though the book itself may be ultimately forgotten, it may have saved some persons from ruin, and may have accomplished its part in keeping up the knowledge of the truth in his own generation. Peter, as a minister of the gospel, felt himself bound to do this, and no men have so good an opportunity of doing this now as ministers of the gospel; no men have more ready access to the press; no men have so much certainty that they will have the public attention, if they will write anything worth reading; no men, commonly, in a

16 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables,^a when we made known unto you the power

^a 2 Co. 4.2.

community are better educated, or are more accustomed to write; no men, by their profession, seem to be so much called to address their fellow-men in any way in favour of the truth; and it is matter of great marvel that men who have such opportunities, and who seem especially called to the work, do not do more of this kind of service in the cause of religion. Themselves soon to die, how can they help desiring that they may leave *something* that shall bear an honourable, though humble, testimony to truths which they so much prize, and which they are appointed to defend? A tract may live long after the author is in the grave; and who can calculate the results which have followed the efforts of Baxter and Edwards to keep up in the world the remembrance of the truths which they deemed of so much value? This little epistle of Peter has shed light on the path of men now for eighteen hundred years, and will continue to do it until the second coming of the Saviour.

16. *For we have not followed cunningly devised fables.* That is, fictions or stories invented by artful men, and resting on no solid foundation. The doctrines which they held about the coming of the Saviour were not, like many of the opinions of the Greeks, defended by weak and sophistical reasoning, but were based on solid evidence—evidence furnished by the personal observation of competent witnesses. It is true of the gospel, in general, that it is not founded on cunningly devised fables; but the particular point referred to here is the promised coming of the Saviour. The evidence of that fact Peter proposes now to adduce. ¶ *When we made known unto you.* Probably Peter here refers particularly to statements respecting the coming of the Saviour in his first epistle, (chap. i. 5, 13; iv. 13;) but this was a common topic in the preaching, and in the epistles, of the apostles. It may, therefore, have referred to statements made to them at some time in his preaching, as well as to what he said in his former epistle. The apostles laid

and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses^b of his majesty.

^b Mat. 17. 1-5; Jn. 1. 14.

great stress on the second coming of the Saviour, and often dwelt upon it. Comp. 1 Thess. iv. 16; Notes, Acts i. 11. ¶ *The power and coming.* These two words refer to the same thing; and the meaning is, his *powerful coming*, or his *coming in power*. The advent of the Saviour is commonly represented as connected with the exhibition of power. Matt. xxiv. 30, 'Coming in the clouds of heaven, with power.' See Notes on that verse. Comp. Luke xxii. 69; Mark iii. 9. The *power* evinced will be by raising the dead; summoning the world to judgment; determining the destiny of men, &c. When the coming of the Saviour, therefore, was referred to by the apostles in their preaching, it was probably always in connection with the declaration that it would be accompanied by exhibitions of great power and glory—as it undoubtedly will be. The fact that the Lord Jesus would thus return, it is clear, had been denied by some among those to whom this epistle was addressed, and it was important to state the evidence on which it was to be believed. The *grounds* on which they denied it (chap. iii. 4) were, that there were no appearances of his approach; that the promise had not been fulfilled; that all things continued as they had been; and that the affairs of the world moved on as they always had done. To meet and counteract this error—an error which so prevailed that many were in danger of 'falling from their own steadfastness,' (chap. iii. 17,)—Peter states the proof on which he believed in the coming of the Saviour. ¶ *But were eye-witnesses of his majesty.* On the mount of transfiguration, Matt. xvii. 1-5. See Notes on that passage. That transfiguration was witnessed only by Peter, James, and John. But it may be asked, how the facts there witnessed demonstrate the point under consideration—that the Lord Jesus will come with power? To this it may be replied, (1,) that these apostles had there such a view of the Saviour in his glory as to convince them beyond doubt

17 For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

18 And this voice which came

a Ps. 119. 105; Pr. 6. 23.

3 Ro. 2. 28; 22. 16.

that he was the Messiah. (2.) That there was a direct attestation given to that fact by a voice from heaven, declaring that he was the beloved Son of God. (3.) That that transfiguration was understood to have an important reference to the coming of the Saviour in his kingdom and his glory, and was designed to be a representation of the manner in which he would then appear. This is referred to distinctly by each one of the three evangelists who have mentioned the transfiguration. Matt. xvi. 28, 'There be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom;' Mark ix. 1, 2; Luke ix. 27, 28. The transfiguration which occurred soon after these words were spoken was *designed* to show them what he would be in his glory, and to furnish to them a demonstration which they could never forget, that he would yet set up his kingdom in the world. (4.) They had in fact such a view of him as he would be in his kingdom, that they could entertain no doubt on the point; and the fact, as it impressed their own minds, they made known to others. The evidence as it lay in Peter's mind was, that that transfiguration was *designed* to furnish proof to them that the Messiah would certainly appear in glory, and to give them a view of him as coming to reign which would never fade from their memory. As that had not yet been accomplished, he maintained that the evidence was clear that it must occur at some future time. As the transfiguration was *with reference* to his coming in his kingdom, it was proper for Peter to use it with that reference, or as bearing on that point.

17. For he received from God the Father honour and glory. He was honoured by God in being thus addressed. ¶ When there came such a voice

from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light ^a that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star ^b arise in your hearts:

to him from the excellent glory. The magnificent splendour; the bright cloud which overshadowed them, Matt. xvii. 5. ¶ *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* See Notes, Matt. xvii. 5; iii. 17. This demonstrated that he was the Messiah. Those who heard that voice could not doubt this; they never did afterwards doubt.

18. And this voice which came from heaven we heard. To wit, Peter, and James, and John. ¶ *When we were with him in the holy mount.* Called *holy* on account of the extraordinary manifestation of the Redeemer's glory there. It is not certainly known what mountain this was, but it has commonly been supposed to be Mount Tabor. See Notes, Matt. xvii. 1.

19. We have also a more sure word of prophecy. That is, a prophecy pertaining to the coming of the Lord Jesus; for that is the point under discussion. There has been considerable diversity of opinion in regard to the meaning of this passage. Some have supposed that the apostle, when he says, '*a more sure word*,' did not intend to make any comparison between the miracle of the transfiguration and prophecy, but that he meant to say merely that the word of prophecy was *very* sure, and could certainly be relied on. Others have supposed that the meaning is, that the prophecies which foretold his coming into the world having been confirmed by the fact of his advent, are rendered more sure and undoubted than when they were uttered, and may now be confidently appealed to. So Rosenmüller, Benson, Macknight, Clarke, Wetstein, and Grotius. Luther renders it, 'we have a firm prophetic word;' omitting the comparison. A literal translation of the passage would be, 'and we have the prophetic word more firm.' If a *comparison* is intended, it may be either

that the prophecy was more sure than the *fables* referred to in ver. 16; or than the miracle of the transfiguration; or than the word which was heard in the holy mount; or than the prophecies even in the time when they were first spoken. If such a comparison was designed, the most obvious of these interpretations would be, that the prophecy was more certain proof than was furnished in the mount of transfiguration. But it seems probable that no *comparison* was intended, and that the thing on which Peter intended to fix the eye was not that the prophecy was a *better* evidence respecting the advent of the Messiah than other evidences, but that it was a *strong* proof which demanded their particular attention, as being of a firm and decided character. There can be no doubt that the apostle refers here to what is contained in the Old Testament; for, in ver. 21, he speaks of the prophecy as that which was spoken 'in old time, by men that were moved by the Holy Ghost.' The *point* to which the prophecies related, and to which Peter referred, was the great doctrine respecting the coming of the Messiah, embracing perhaps all that pertained to his work, or all that he designed to do by his advent. They had had one illustrious proof respecting his advent as a glorious Saviour by his transfiguration on the mount; and the apostle here says that the prophecies abounded with truths on these points, and that they ought to give earnest heed to the disclosures which they made, and to compare them diligently with facts as they occurred, that they might be confirmed more and more in the truth. If, however, as the more obvious sense of this passage *seems* to be, and as many suppose to be the correct interpretation, (see Doddridge, *in loc.*, and Professor Stuart, on the canon of the Old Test., p. 329,) it means that the prophecy was more sure, more steadfast, more to be depended on than even what the three disciples had seen and heard in the mount of transfiguration, this may be regarded as true in the following respects: (1.) The prophecies are *numerous*, and by their number they furnish a stronger proof than could be afforded by a single manifestation, however clear

and glorious. (2.) They were *recorded*, and might be the subject of careful comparison with the events as they occurred. (3.) They were written long beforehand, and it could not be urged that the testimony which the prophets bore was owing to any illusion on their minds, or to any agreement among the different writers to impose on the world. Though Peter regarded the testimony which he and James and John bore to the glory of the Saviour, from what they saw on the holy mount, as strong and clear confirmation that he was the Son of God, yet he could not but be aware that it might be suggested by a caviller that they might have *agreed* to impose on others, or that they might have been dazzled and deceived by some natural phenomenon occurring there. Comp. Kuinoel on Matt. xvii. 1, seq. (4.) Even supposing that there was a miracle in the case, the evidence of the prophecies, embracing many points in the same general subject, and extending through a long series of years, would be more satisfactory than any single miracle whatever. See Doddridge, *in loc.* The general meaning is, that the fact that he had come as the Messiah was disclosed in the mount by such a manifestation of his glory, and of what he would be, that they who saw it could not doubt it; the same thing the apostle says was more fully shown also in the prophecies, and these prophecies demanded their close and prolonged attention. ¶ *Whereunto ye do well that ye take heed.* They are worthy of your study, of your close and careful investigation. There is perhaps no study more worthy of the attention of Christians than that of the prophecies. ¶ *As unto a light that shineth in a dark place.* That is, the prophecies resemble a candle, lamp, or torch, in a dark room, or in an obscure road at night. They make objects distinct which were before unseen; they enable us to behold many things which would be otherwise invisible. The object of the apostle in this representation seems to have been, to state that the prophecies do not give a *perfect* light, or that they do not remove *all* obscurity, but that they shed some light on objects which would otherwise be *entirely* dark, and that the light which they furnished

20 Knowing this first, that no

prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

was so valuable that we ought by all means to endeavour to avail ourselves of it. Until the day shall dawn, and we shall see objects by the clear light of the sun, they are to be our guide. A lamp is of great value in a dark night, though it may not disclose objects so clearly as the light of the sun. But it may be a safe and sure guide; and a man who has to travel in dark and dangerous places, does 'well' to 'take heed' to his lamp. ¶ *Until the day dawn.* Until you have the clearer light which shall result from the dawning of the day. The reference here is to the morning light as compared with a lamp; and the meaning is, that we should attend to the light furnished by the prophecies until the truth shall be rendered more distinct by the events as they shall actually be disclosed—until the brighter light which shall be shed on all things by the glory of the second advent of the Saviour, and the clearing up of what is now obscure in the splendours of the heavenly world. The point of comparison is between the necessary obscurity of prophecy, and the clearness of events when they actually occur—a difference like that which is observable in the objects around us when seen by the shining of the lamp and by the light of the sun. The apostle directs the mind onward to a period when all shall be clear—to that glorious time when the Saviour shall return to receive his people to himself in that heaven where all shall be light. Comp. Rev. xxi. 23—25; xxii. 5. Meantime we should avail ourselves of all the light which we have, and should apply ourselves diligently to the study of the prophecies of the Old Testament which are still unfulfilled, and of those in the New Testament which direct the mind onward to brighter and more glorious scenes than this world has yet witnessed. In our darkness they are a cheering lamp to guide our feet, till that illustrious day shall dawn. Comp. Notes, 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10. ¶ *And the day-star.* The morning star—the bright star that at certain periods of the year leads on the day, and which

is a pledge that the morning is about to dawn. Comp. Rev. ii. 28; xxii. 16. ¶ *Arise in your hearts.* On your hearts; that is, sheds its beams on your hearts. Till you see the indications of that approaching day in which all is light. The period referred to here by the approaching day that is to diffuse this light, is when the Saviour shall return in the full revelation of his glory—the splendour of his kingdom. Then all will be clear. Till that time, we should search the prophetic records, and strengthen our faith, and comfort our hearts, by the predictions of the future glory of his reign. Whether this refers, as some suppose, to his reign on earth, either personally or by the principles of his religion universally prevailing, or, as others suppose, to the brighter revelations of heaven when he shall come to receive his people to himself, it is equally clear that a brighter time than any that has yet occurred is to dawn on our race, and equally true that we should regard the prophecies, as we do the morning star, as the cheering harbinger of day.

20. *Knowing this first.* Bearing this steadily in mind as a primary and most important truth. ¶ *That no prophecy of the Scripture.* No prophecy contained in the inspired records. The word *scripture* here shows that the apostle referred particularly to the prophecies recorded in the Old Testament. The remark which he makes about prophecy is general, though it is designed to bear on a particular class of the prophecies. ¶ *Is of any private interpretation.* The expression here used (*ἵνας ἰδιώματα*) has given rise to as great a diversity of interpretation, and to as much discussion, as perhaps any phrase in the New Testament; and to the present time there is no general agreement among expositors as to its meaning. It would be foreign to the design of these Notes, and would be of little utility, to enumerate the different interpretations which have been given of the passage, or to examine them in detail. It will be sufficient to remark, preparatory to endeavouring to ascertain the true sense

of the passage, that some have held that it teaches that no prophecy can be interpreted of itself, but can be understood only by comparing it with the event; others, that it teaches that the prophets did not themselves understand what they wrote, but were mere passive organs under the dictation of the Holy Spirit to communicate to future times what they could not themselves explain; others, that it teaches that 'no prophecy is of self-interpretation,' (*Horsley*;) others, that it teaches that the prophecies, besides having a literal signification, have also a hidden and mystical sense which cannot be learned from the prophecies themselves, but is to be perceived by a peculiar power of insight imparted by the Holy Ghost, enabling men to understand their recondite mysteries. It would be easy to show that some of these opinions are absurd, and that none of them are sustained by the fair interpretation of the language used, and by the drift of the passage. The more correct interpretation, as it seems to me, is that which supposes that the apostle teaches that the truths which the prophets communicated were not originated by themselves; were not of their own suggestion or invention; were not their own opinions, but were of higher origin, and were imparted by God; and according to this the passage may be explained, 'knowing this as a point of first importance when you approach the prophecies, or always bearing this in mind, that it is a great principle in regard to the prophets, that what they communicated was not of their own disclosure; that is, was not revealed or originated by them.' That this is the correct interpretation will be apparent from the following considerations: (1.) It accords with the *design* of the apostle, which is to produce an impressive sense of the importance and value of the prophecies, and to lead those to whom he wrote to study them with diligence. This could be secured in no way so well as by assuring them that the writings which he wished them to study did not contain truths originated by the human mind, but that they were of higher origin. (2.) This interpretation accords with what is said in the following verse, and is the only one of all those proposed that is

consistent with that, or in connection with which that verse will have any force. In that verse (21,) a *reason* is given for what is said here: '*For (γὰρ) the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man,*' &c. But this can be a good reason for what is said here only on the supposition that the apostle meant to say that what they communicated was not originated by themselves; that it was of a higher than human origin; that the prophets spake 'as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.' This fact was a good reason why they should show profound respect for the prophecies, and study them with attention. But how could the fact that *they were moved by the Holy Ghost* be a reason for studying them, if the meaning here is that the prophets could not understand their own language, or that the prophecy could be understood only by the event, or that the prophecy had a double meaning, &c.? If the prophecies were of Divine origin, then *that was* a good reason why they should be approached with reverence, and should be profoundly studied. (3.) This interpretation accords as well, to say the least, with the fair meaning of the language employed, as either of the other opinions proposed. The word rendered *interpretation* (ἐκτίλις) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It properly means *solution*, (*Rob. Lex.*,) *disclosure*, (*Prof. Stuart on the Old Testament*, p. 328,) *making free* (*Passow*,) with the notion that what is thus released or loosed was before bound, entangled, obscure. The verb from which this word is derived (ἐκτίλω) means, *to let loose upon*, as dogs upon a hare, (*Xen. Mem.* 7, 8; *ib.* 9, 10;) to loose or open letters; to loosen a band; to loose or disclose a riddle or a dark saying, and then to enlighten, illustrate, &c.—*Passow*. It is twice used in the New Testament. *Mark* iv. 34, 'He expounded all things to his disciples; *Acts* xix. 39, 'It shall be determined in a lawful assembly.' The verb would be applicable to loosing anything which is bound or confined, and thence to the explanation of a mysterious doctrine or a parable, or to a disclosure of what was before unknown. The word, according to this, in the place before us, would mean the disclosure of what was before

21 For the prophecy came not¹ in
 a old time by the will of man : but

1 Or, at any.

a Lu. 1.70.

holy men of God spake as they were
 moved by^b the Holy Ghost.

b 2 Ti. 3.16.

bound, or retained, or unknown ; either what had never been communicated at all, or what had been communicated obscurely ; and the idea is, 'no prophecy recorded in the Scripture is of, or comes from, any exposition or disclosure of the will and purposes of God by the prophets themselves.' It is not a thing of their own, or a private matter originating with themselves, but it is to be traced to a higher source. If this be the true interpretation, then it follows that the prophecies are to be regarded as of higher than any human origin ; and then, also, it follows that this passage should not be used to prove that the prophets did not understand the nature of their own communications, or that they were mere unconscious and passive instruments in the hand of God to make known his will. Whatever may be the truth on those points, this passage proves nothing in regard to them, any more than the fact that a minister of religion now declares truth which he did not originate, but which is to be traced to God as its author, proves that he does not understand what he himself says. It follows, also, that this passage cannot be adduced by the Papists to prove that the people at large should not have free access to the word of God, and should not be allowed to interpret it for themselves. It makes no affirmation on that point, and does not even contain any principle of which such a use can be made ; for, (1.) whatever it means, it is confined to *prophecy* ; it does not embrace the whole Bible. (2.) Whatever it means, it merely states a *fact* ; it does not enjoin a *duty*. It states, as a fact, that there was *something* about the prophecies which was not of private solution, but it does not state that it is the duty of the church to *prevent* any private explanation or opinion even of the prophecies. (3.) It says nothing about the church as empowered to give a public or authorized interpretation of the prophecies. There is not a hint, or an intimation of any kind, that the church is intrusted with any such power what-

ever. There never was any greater perversion of a passage of Scripture than to suppose that this teaches that any class of men is not to have free access to the Bible. The effect of the passage, properly interpreted, should be to lead us to study the Bible with profound reverence, as having a higher than any human origin, not to turn away from it as if it were unintelligible, nor to lead us to suppose that it can be interpreted only by one class of men. The fact that it discloses truths which the human mind could not of itself have originated, is a good reason for studying it with diligence and with prayer—not for supposing that it is unlawful for us to attempt to understand it ; a good reason for reverence and veneration for it—not for sanctified neglect.

21. *For the prophecy came not in old time.* Marg., 'or, at any.' The Greek word (αὐτοὶ) will bear either construction. It would be true in either sense, but the reference is particularly to the recorded prophecies in the Old Testament. What was true of them, however, is true of all prophecy, that it is not by the will of man. The word *prophecy* here is without the article, meaning prophecy in general—all that is prophetic in the Old Testament ; or, in a more general sense still, all that the prophets taught, whether relating to future events or not. ¶ *By the will of man.* It was not of human origin ; not discovered by the human mind. The word *will*, here seems to be used in the sense of *prompting* or *suggestion* ; men did not speak by their own suggestion, but as truth was brought to them by God. ¶ *But holy men of God.* Pious men commissioned by God, or employed by him as his messengers to mankind. ¶ *Spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.* Comp. 2 Tim. iii. 16. The Greek phrase here (ὡς ὑπὸ πνεύματος ἁγίου φερόμενοι) means *borne along, moved, influenced* by the Holy Ghost. The idea is, that in what they spake they were *carried along* by an influence from above. They moved in the case

CHAPTER II.

BUT there ^awere false prophets also among the people even as there shall be false teachers among you, ^bwho privily shall bring in

only as they were moved; they spake only as the influence of the Holy Ghost was upon them. They were no more self-moved than a vessel at sea is that is impelled by the wind; and as the progress made by the vessel is to be measured by the impulse bearing upon it, so the statements made by the prophets are to be traced to the impulse which bore upon their minds. They were not, indeed, in all respects like such a vessel, but only in regard to the fact that all they said as prophets was to be traced to the foreign influence that bore upon their minds. There could not be, therefore, a more decided declaration than this in proof that the prophets were inspired. If the authority of Peter is admitted, his positive and explicit assertion settles the question. If this be so, also, then the point with reference to which he makes this observation is abundantly confirmed, that the prophecies demand our earnest attention, and that we should give all the heed to them which we would to a light or lamp when travelling in a dangerous way, and in a dark night. In a still more general sense, the remark here made may also be applied to the whole of the Scriptures. We are in a dark world. We see few things clearly; and all around us, on a thousand questions, there is the obscurity of midnight. By nature there is nothing to cast light on those questions, and we are perplexed, bewildered, embarrassed. The Bible is given to us to shed light on our way. It is the *only* light which we have respecting the future, and though it does not give *all* the information which we might desire in regard to what is to come, yet it gives us sufficient light to guide us to heaven. It teaches us what it is necessary to know about God, about our duty, and about the way of salvation, in order to conduct us safely; and no one who has committed himself to its direction, has been suffered to wander finally away from the paths of salva-

damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

^a De. 13. 1, &c.

^b Mat. 24. 5, 24; Ac. 20. 29, 30; 1 Ti. 4. 1.

tion. It is, therefore, a duty to attend to the instructions which the Bible imparts, and to commit ourselves to its holy guidance in our journey to a better world: for soon, if we are faithful to its teachings, the light of eternity will dawn upon us, and there, amidst its cloudless splendour, we shall see as we are seen, and know as we are known; then we shall 'need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God shall give us light, and we shall reign for ever and ever.' Comp. Rev. xxi. 22-24; xxii. 5.

CHAPTER II.

ANALYSIS OF THE CHAPTER.

THE general subject of this chapter is stated in the first verse, and it embraces these points: (1.) that it might be expected that there would be false teachers among Christians, as there were false prophets in ancient times; (2.) that they would introduce destructive errors, leading many astray; and, (3.) that they would be certainly punished. The design of the chapter is to illustrate and defend these points.

I. That there would be such false teachers the apostle expressly states in ver. 1; and incidentally in that verse, and elsewhere in the chapter, he notices some of their characteristics, or some of the doctrines which they would hold. (a) They would deny the Lord that bought them, ver. 1. See Notes on that verse. (b) They would be influenced by covetousness, and their object in their attempting to seduce others from the faith, and to induce them to become followers of themselves, would be to make money, ver. 3. (c) They would be corrupt, beastly, and licentious in their conduct; and it would be one design of their teaching to show that the indulgence of gross passions was not inconsistent with religion; ver. 10, 'that walk after the flesh, in the lust of uncleanness;' ver. 12, 'as natural brute beasts;' 'shall perish in their own cor-

ruption;’ ver. 14, ‘having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin;’ ver. 22, ‘the dog has returned to his own vomit again.’ (d) They would be proud, arrogant, and self-willed; men who would despise all proper government, and who would be thoroughly ‘*radical*’ in their views; ver. 10, ‘and despise government; presumptuous are they and self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities;’ ver. 18, ‘they speak great swelling words of vanity.’ (e) They were persons who had been formerly of corrupt lives, but who had become professing Christians. This is implied in vers. 20–22. They are spoken of as having ‘escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;’ as ‘having known the ways of righteousness,’ but as having turned again to their former corrupt practices and lusts; ‘it has happened to them according to the true proverb,’ &c. There were various classes of persons in primitive times, coming under the general appellation of the term *Gnostic*, to whom this description would apply, and it is probable that they had begun to broach their doctrines in the times of the apostles. Among those persons were the Ebionites, Corinthians, Nicolaitanes, &c.

II. These false teachers would obtain followers, and their teachings would be likely to allure many. This is intimated more than once in the chapter: ver. 2, ‘and many shall follow their pernicious ways;’ ver. 3, ‘and through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you;’ ver. 14, ‘beguiling unstable souls.’ Comp. ver. 18.

III. They would certainly be punished. A large part of the chapter is taken up in proving this point, and especially in showing from the examples of others who had erred in a similar manner, that they could not escape destruction. In doing this, the apostle refers to the following facts and illustrations: (1.) The case of the angels that sinned, and that were cast down to hell, ver. 4. If God brought such dreadful punishment on those who were once before his throne, wicked men could have no hope of escape. (2.) The case of the wicked in the time of Noah, who were

cut off by the flood, ver. 5. (3.) The case of Sodom and Gomorrah, ver. 6. (4.) The *character* of the persons referred to was such that they could have no hope of escape. (a) They were corrupt, sensual, presumptuous, and self-willed, and were even worse than the rebel angels had been—men that seemed to be made to be taken and destroyed, vers. 10–12. (b) They were spots and blemishes, sensual and adulterers, emulating the example of Balaam, who was rebuked by even a dumb ass for his iniquity, vers. 13–16. (c) They allured others to sin under the specious promise of liberty, while they were themselves the slaves of debased appetites, and gross and sensual passions, vers. 17–19. From the entire description in this chapter, it is clear that the persons referred to, though once professors of religion, had become eminently abandoned and corrupt. It may not, indeed, be easy to identify them with any particular sect or class then existing and now known in history, though not a few of the sects in the early Christian church bore a strong resemblance to this description; but there have been those in every age who have strongly resembled these persons; and this chapter, therefore, possesses great value as containing important warnings against the arts of false teachers, and the danger of being seduced by them from the truth. Compare Introduction to the Epistle of Jude, § 3, 4.

1. *But there were false prophets also among the people.* In the previous chapter, (vers. 19–21,) Peter had appealed to the prophecies as containing unanswerable proofs of the truth of the Christian religion. He says, however, that he did not mean to say that all who claimed to be prophets were true messengers of God. There were many who pretended to be such, who only led the people astray. It is unnecessary to say, that such men have abounded in all ages where there have been true prophets. ¶ *Even as there shall be false teachers among you.* The fact that false teachers would arise in the church is often adverted to in the New Testament. Compare Matt. xxiv. 5, 24; Acts xx. 29, 30. ¶ *Who privily* That is, in a secret manner, or under

plausible arts and pretences. They would not at first make an open avowal of their doctrines, but would, in fact, while their teachings *seemed* to be in accordance with truth, covertly maintain opinions which would sap the very foundations of religion. The Greek word here used, and which is rendered 'who privily shall bring in,' (*παρισάγων*), means properly *to lead in by the side of others*; *to lead in along with others*. Nothing could better express the usual way in which error is introduced. It is *by the side*, or *along with*, other doctrines which are true; that is, while the mind is turned mainly to other subjects, and is off its guard, gently and silently to lay down some principle, which, being admitted, would lead to the error, or from which the error would follow as a natural consequence. Those who inculcate error rarely do it openly. If they would at once boldly 'deny the Lord that bought them,' it would be easy to meet them, and the mass of professed Christians would be in no danger of embracing the error. But when principles are laid down which may lead to that; when doubts on remote points are suggested which may involve it; or when a long train of reasoning is pursued which may secretly tend to it; there is much more probability that the mind will be corrupted from the truth. ¶ *Damnable heresies, αἰρέσεις ἀπωλείας*. 'Heresies of destruction;' that is, heresies that will be followed by destruction. The Greek word which is rendered *damnable*, is the same which in the close of the verse is rendered *destruction*. It is so rendered also in Matt. vii. 13; Rom. ix. 22; Phil. iii. 19; 2 Pet. iii. 16—in all of which places it refers to the future loss of the soul. The same word also is rendered *perdition* in John xvii. 12; Phil. i. 28; 1 Tim. vi. 9; Heb. x. 39; 2 Pet. iii. 7; Rev. xvii. 8, 11—in all which places it has the same reference. On the meaning of the word rendered '*heresies*,' see Notes on Acts xxiv. 14; 1 Cor. xi. 19. The idea of *sect* or *party* is that which is conveyed by this word, rather than doctrinal errors; but it is evident that in this case the formation of the sect or party, as is the fact in most cases, would be founded on error of doctrine.

The thing which these false teachers would attempt would be divisions, alienations, or parties, in the church, but these would be based on the erroneous doctrines which they would promulgate. What would be the particular doctrine in this case is immediately specified, to wit, that they 'would deny the Lord that bought them.' The idea then is, that these false teachers would form sects or parties in the church, of a destructive or ruinous nature, founded on a denial of the Lord that bought them. Such a formation of sects would be ruinous to piety, to good morals, and to the soul. The authors of these sects, holding the views which they did, and influenced by the motives which they would be, and practising the morals which they would practise, as growing out of their principles, would bring upon themselves swift and certain destruction. It is not possible now to determine to what particular class of errorists the apostle had reference here, but it is generally supposed that it was to some form of the Gnostic belief. There were many early sects of so-called *heretics* to whom what he here says would be applicable. ¶ *Even denying the Lord that bought them*. This must mean that they held doctrines which were *in fact* a denial of the Lord, or the tendency of which would be a denial of the Lord, for it cannot be supposed that, while they professed to be Christians, they would openly and avowedly deny him. To 'deny the Lord' may be either to deny his existence, his claims, or his attributes; it is to withhold from him, in our belief and profession, anything which is essential to a proper conception of him. The particular thing, however, which is mentioned here as entering into that self-denial, is something connected with the fact that he had '*bought*' them. It was such a denial of the Lord as *having bought them*, as to be in fact a renunciation of the peculiarity of the Christian religion. There has been much difference of opinion as to the meaning of the word *Lord* in this place—whether it refers to God the Father, or to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Greek word is *Δεσπότης*—*despotes*. Many expositors have maintained that it refers to the Father, and that when

it is said that he had *bought* them, it means in a general sense that he was the Author of the plan of redemption, and had *caused* them to be purchased or redeemed. Michaelis supposes that the Gnostics are referred to as denying the Father by asserting that he was not the Creator of the universe, maintaining that it was created by an inferior being.—Intro. to New Testament, iv. 360. Whitby, Benson, Slade, and many others, maintain that this refers to the Father as having originated the plan by which men are redeemed; and the same opinion is held, of necessity, by those who deny the doctrine of general atonement. The only *arguments* to show that it refers to God the Father would be, (1,) that the word used here (*Δισπότης*) is not the usual term (*κύριος*) by which the Lord Jesus is designated in the New Testament; and (2,) that the admission that it refers to the Lord Jesus would lead inevitably to the conclusion that some will perish for whom Christ died. That it *does*, however, refer to the Lord Jesus, seems to me to be plain from the following considerations: (1.) It is the obvious interpretation; that which would be given by the great mass of Christians, and about which there could never have been any hesitancy if it had not been supposed that it would lead to the doctrine of general atonement. As to the alleged fact that the word used (*Despotes*) is not that which is commonly applied to the Lord Jesus, that may be admitted to be true, but still the word here may be understood as applied to him. It properly means a *master* as opposed to a servant; then it is used as denoting supreme authority, and is thus applied to God, and may be in that sense to the Lord Jesus Christ, as head over all things, or as having supreme authority over the church. It occurs in the New Testament only in the following places: 1 Tim. vi. 1, 2; Titus ii. 9; 1 Pet. ii. 18, where it is rendered *masters*; Luke ii. 29; Acts iv. 24; Rev. vi. 10, where it is rendered *Lord*, and is applied to God; and in Jude 4, and in the passage before us, in both which places it is rendered *Lord*, and is probably to be regarded as applied to the Lord Jesus. There is nothing in the proper signification of the

word which would forbid this. (2.) The phrase is one that is properly applicable to the Lord Jesus as having *bought* us with his blood. The Greek word is *ἀγοράζω*—a word which means properly *to market*, *to buy*, *to purchase*, and then to redeem, or acquire for one's self by a price paid, or by a ransom. It is rendered *buy* or *bought* in the following places in the New Testament: Matt. xiii. 44, 46; xiv. 15; xxi. 12; xxv. 9, 10; xxvii. 7; Mark. vi. 36, 37; xi. 15; xv. 46; xvi. 1; Luke ix. 13; xiv. 18, 19; xvii. 28; xix. 45; xxii. 36; John iv. 8; vi. 5; xiii. 29; 1 Cor. vii. 30; Rev. iii. 18; xiii. 17; xviii. 11,—in all which places it is applicable to ordinary transactions of *buying*. In the following places it is also rendered *bought*, as applicable to the redeemed, as being bought or purchased by the Lord Jesus: 1 Cor. vi. 20; vii. 23, 'Ye are *bought* with a price;' and in the following places it is rendered *redeemed*, Rev. v. 9; xiv. 3, 4. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It is true that in a large sense this word might be applied to the Father as having caused his people to be redeemed, or as being the Author of the plan of redemption; but it is also true that the word is more properly applicable to the Lord Jesus, and that, when used with reference to redemption, it is uniformly given to him in the New Testament. Compare the passages referred to above. It is strictly and properly true only of the Son of God that he has '*bought*' us. The Father indeed is represented as making the arrangement, as giving his Son to die, and as the great Source of all the blessings secured by redemption; but the *purchase* was actually made by the Son of God by his sacrifice on the cross. Whatever there was of the nature of a *price* was paid by him; and whatever obligations may grow out of the fact that we are purchased or ransomed are due particularly to him; 2 Cor. v. 15. These considerations seem to me to make it clear that Peter referred here to the Lord Jesus Christ, and that he meant to say that the false teachers mentioned held doctrines which were in fact a *denial* of that Saviour. He does not specify particularly what constituted

2 And many shall follow their
1 pernicious ways; by reason of

1 Or, *lascivious*, as some copies read.

whom the way of truth shall be evil
spoken of.

such a denial; but it is plain that any doctrine which represented him, his person, or his work, as essentially different from what was the truth, would amount to such a denial. If he was Divine, and that fact was denied, making him wholly a different being; if he actually made an expiatory sacrifice by his death, and that fact was denied, and he was held to be a mere religious teacher, changing essentially the character of the work which he came to perform; if he, in some proper sense, 'bought' them with his blood, and that fact was denied in such a way that according to their views it was not strictly proper to speak of him as having *bought* them at all, which would be the case if he were a mere prophet or religious teacher, then it is clear that such a representation would be in fact a denial of his true nature and work. That some of these views entered into their *denial* of him is clear, for it was with reference to the fact that he had 'bought' them, or redeemed them, that they denied him.

¶ *And bring upon themselves swift destruction.* The *destruction* here referred to can be only that which will occur in the future world, for there can be no evidence that Peter meant to say that this would destroy their health, their property, or their lives. The Greek word (*ἀπώλειαν*) is the same which is used in the former part of the verse, in the phrase '*damnable heresies*.' See Notes. In regard, then, to this important passage, we may remark, (1.) that the apostle evidently believed that some would perish for whom Christ died. (2.) If this be so, then the same truth may be expressed by saying that he died for others besides those who will be saved; that is, that the atonement was not confined merely to the elect. This one passage, therefore, demonstrates the doctrine of general atonement. This conclusion would be drawn from it by the great mass of readers, and it may be presumed, therefore, that this is the fair interpretation of the passage.

[See the Supplementary Notes on 2 Cor. v. 14; Heb. ii. 9 for a general view of the question re-

garding the extent of the atonement. On this text Scott has well observed: 'Doubtless Christ intended to redeem those, and those only, who he foresaw would *eventually* be saved by faith in him; yet his ransom was of infinite sufficiency, and men are continually addressed according to their profession.' Christ has indeed laid down such a price as that all the human family may claim and find salvation in him. An unhappy ambiguity of terms has made this controversy very much a war of words. When the author here says, 'Christ died for others besides those who will be saved,' he does not use the words in the common sense of an actual *design* on the part of Christ to save all. The reader will see, by consulting the Notes above referred to, how much disputing might be saved by a careful definition of terms.]

(3.) It follows that men may destroy themselves by a denial of the great and vital *doctrines* of religion. It cannot be a harmless thing, then, to hold erroneous opinions; nor can men be safe who deny the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. It is truth, not error, that saves the soul; and an erroneous opinion on any subject may be as dangerous to a man's ultimate peace, happiness, and prosperity, as a wrong course of life. How many men have been ruined in their worldly prospects, their health, and their lives, by holding false sentiments on the subject of morals, or in regard to medical treatment! Who would regard it as a harmless thing if a son should deny in respect to his father that he was a man of truth, probity, and honesty, or should attribute to him a character which does not belong to him—a character just the reverse of truth? Can the same thing be innocent in regard to God our Saviour? (4.) Men bring destruction '*on themselves*.' No one *compels* them to deny the Lord that bought them; no one *forces* them to embrace any dangerous error. If men perish, they perish by their own fault. for (a) ample provision was made for their salvation as well as for others, (b) they were freely invited to be saved; (c) it was, in itself, just as easy for them to embrace the truth as it was for others; and (d) it was as easy to embrace the truth as to embrace error.

2. And many shall follow their per-

3 And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you : whose judgment

now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

α Jude 4-7.

icious ways. Marg., *lascivious.* A large number of manuscripts and versions read *lascivious* here—*ἀσελγίαις*—instead of *pernicious*—*ἀπωλείαις*, (see Wetstein,) and this reading is adopted in the editions of the Greek Testament by Tittman, Griesbach, and Hahn, and it seems probable that this is the correct reading. This will agree well with the account elsewhere given of these teachers, that their doctrines tended to licentiousness, vers. 10, 14, 18, 19. It is a very remarkable circumstance, that those who have denied the essential doctrines of the gospel have been so frequently licentious in their own conduct, and have inculcated opinions which tended to licentiousness. Many of the forms of religious error have somehow had a connection with this vice. Men who are corrupt at heart often seek to obtain for their corruptions the sanction of religion. ¶ *By reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.* (1.) Because they were professors of religion, and religion would seem to be held responsible for their conduct; and, (2.) because they were professed teachers of religion, and, by many, would be understood as expounding the true doctrines of the gospel.

3. *And through covetousness.* This shows what one of the things was by which they were influenced—a thing which, like licentiousness, usually exerts a powerful influence over the teachers of error. The religious principle is the strongest that is implanted in the human bosom; and men who can obtain a livelihood in no other way, or who are too unprincipled or too indolent to labour for an honest living, often turn public teachers of religion, and adopt the kind of doctrines that will be likely to give them the greatest power over the purses of others. True religion, indeed, requires of its friends to devote all that they have to the service of God and to the promotion of his cause; but it is very easy to pervert this requirement, so that the teacher of error shall take advantage of it for his own aggrandizement. ¶ *Shall they with feigned words.* Gr. formed,

fashioned; then those which are *formed* for the occasion—feigned, false, deceitful. The idea is, that the doctrines which they would defend were not maintained by solid and substantial arguments, but that they would make use of plausible reasoning *made up* for the occasion. ¶ *Make merchandise of you.* Treat you not as rational beings but as a bale of goods, or any other article of traffic. That is, they would endeavour to make money out of them, and regard them only as fitted to promote that object. ¶ *Whose judgment.* Whose condemnation. ¶ *Now of a long time lingereth not.* Greek, ‘of old; long since.’ The idea seems to be, that justice had been long attentive to their movements, and was on its way to their destruction. It was not a new thing—that is, there was no new principle involved in their destruction; but it was a principle which had always been in operation, and which would certainly be applicable to them, and of a long time justice had been impatient to do the work which it was accustomed to do. What had occurred to the angels that sinned, (ver. 4.) to the old world, (ver. 5,) and to Sodom and Gomorrah, (ver. 6,) would occur to them; and the same justice which had overthrown them might be regarded as on its way to effect their destruction. Comp. Notes, Isa. xviii. 4. ¶ *And their damnation slumbereth not.* Their condemnation, (Notes, 1 Cor. xi. 29,) yet here referring to future punishment. ‘Mr. Blackwell observes, that this is a most beautiful figure, representing the vengeance that shall destroy such incorrigible sinners as an angel of judgment pursuing them on the wing, continually approaching nearer and nearer, and in the mean time keeping a watchful eye upon them, that he may at length discharge an unerring blow.’—*Doddridge.* It is not uncommon to speak of ‘sleepless justice;’ and the idea here is, that however justice may have *seemed* to slumber or to linger, it was not really so, but that it had on them an ever-watchful eye, and was on its way to do that which was right in regard to them.

4 For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast *them* down to hell, and delivered *them* into chains

of darkness. to be reserved unto judgment ;

5 And spared not the old world,

A sinner should never forget that there is an eye of unslumbering vigilance always upon him, and that everything that he does is witnessed by one who will yet render exact justice to all men. No man, however careful to conceal his sins, or however bold in transgression, or however unconcerned he may seem to be, can hope that justice will always linger, or destruction always slumber.

4. *For if God spared not the angels that sinned.* The apostle now proceeds to the proof of the proposition that these persons would be punished. It is to be remembered that they had been, or were even then, professing Christians, though they had really, if not in form, apostatized from the faith, (vers. 20-22;) and a part of the proofs, therefore, are derived from the cases of those who had apostatized from the service of God. He appeals, therefore, to the case of the angels that had revolted. Neither their former rank, their dignity, nor their holiness, saved them from being thrust down to hell; and if God punished them so severely, then false teachers could not hope to escape. The apostle, by the *angels* here, refers undoubtedly to a revolt in heaven—an event referred to in Jude 6, and everywhere implied in the Scriptures. *When* that occurred, however—*why* they revolted, or what was the number of the apostates—we have not the slightest information, and on these points conjecture would be useless. In the supposition that it occurred, there is no improbability; for there is nothing more absurd in the belief that angels have revolted than that men have; and if there are evil angels, as there is no more reason to doubt than that there are evil men, it is morally certain that they must have fallen at some period from a state of holiness, for it cannot be believed that God *made* them wicked. ¶ *But cast them down to hell.* Gr., *εκαρπώσας*—‘thrusting them down to Tartarus.’ The word here used occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, though it is common in the classical writers. It is a verb formed from *Τάρταρος* (*Tartarus*), which in Greek my-

thology was the lower part, or abyss of hades where the shades of the wicked were supposed to be imprisoned and tormented, and answered to the Jewish word *Γέεννα*—*Gehenna*. It was regarded, commonly, as beneath the earth; as entered through the grave; as dark, dismal, gloomy; and as a place of punishment. Comp. Notes, Job x. 21, 22, and Matt. v. 22. The word here is one that properly refers to a place of punishment, since the whole argument relates to that, and since it cannot be pretended that the ‘angels that sinned’ were removed to a place of happiness on account of their transgression. It must also refer to punishment in some other world than this, for there is no evidence that *this* world is made a place of punishment for fallen angels. ¶ *And delivered them into chains of darkness.* ‘Where darkness lies like chains upon them.’—*Rob. Lex.* The meaning seems to be, that they are confined in that dark prison-house *as if* by chains. We are not to suppose that spirits are literally bound; but it was common to bind or fetter prisoners who were in dungeons, and the representation here is taken from that fact. This representation that the mass of fallen angels are confined in *Tartarus*, or in hell, is not inconsistent with the representations which elsewhere occur that their leader is permitted to roam the earth, and that even many of those spirits are allowed to tempt men. It may be still true that the mass are confined within the limits of their dark abode; and it may even be true also that Satan and those who are permitted to roam the earth are under bondage, and are permitted to range only within certain bounds, and that they are so secured that they will be brought to trial at the last day. ¶ *To be reserved unto judgment:* Jude 6, ‘to the judgment of the great day.’ They will then, with the revolted inhabitants of this world, be brought to trial for their crimes. That the fallen angels will be punished *after* the judgment is apparent from Rev. xx. 10. The argument in this verse is, that if God punished the angels who revolted

but saved Noah "the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;

6 And turning the cities of ^b Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, con-

a Ge. 7. 1, &c.

b Ge. 19. 24, 25.

from him, it is a fair inference that he will punish wicked men, though they were once professors of religion.

5. *And spared not the old world.* The world before the flood. The argument here is, that he cut off that wicked race, and thus showed that he would punish the guilty. By that awful act of sweeping away the inhabitants of a world, he showed that men could not sin with impunity, and that the incorrigibly wicked must perish. ¶ *But saved Noah the eighth person.* This reference to Noah, like the reference to Lot in ver. 7, seems to have been thrown in in the progress of the argument as an incidental remark, to show that the righteous, however few in number, would be saved when the wicked were cut off. The phrase 'Noah the eighth,' means Noah, one of eight; that is, Noah and seven others. This idiom is found, says Dr. Bloomfield, in the best writers—from Herodotus and Thucydides downwards. See examples in Wetstein. The meaning in this place then is, that eight persons, and eight only of that race, were saved; thus showing, that while the wicked would be punished, however numerous they might be, the righteous, however few, would be saved. ¶ *A preacher of righteousness.* In Gen. vi. 9, it is said of Noah that he was 'a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God;' and it may be presumed that during his long life he was faithful in reproving the wickedness of his age, and warned the world of the judgment that was preparing for it. Compare Notes, Heb. xi. 7. ¶ *Bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly.* Upon all the world besides that pious family. The argument here is, that if God would cut off a wicked race in this manner, the principle is settled that the wicked will not escape.

6. *And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes.* Gen. xix.

demned *them* with an overthrow, making *them* an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly;

7 And delivered just Lot, ^a vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked;

c De. 29. 23.

d Ge. 19. 18.

24, 25. This is a third example to demonstrate that God will punish the wicked. Comp. Notes, Jude 7. The word here rendered 'turning into ashes,' (*τιφάσεις*.) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is from *τιφρα*, (*ashes*,) and means to reduce to ashes, and then to consume or destroy. ¶ *Condemned them with an overthrow.* By the fact of their being overthrown, he showed that they were to be condemned, or that he disapproved their conduct. Their calamity came expressly on account of their enormous sins; as it is frequently the case now that the awful judgments that come upon the licentious and the intemperate, are as plain a proof of the Divine disapprobation as were the calamities that came upon Sodom and Gomorrah. ¶ *Making them an ensample, &c.* That is, they were a demonstration that God disapproved of the crimes for which they were punished, and would disapprove of the same crimes in every age and in every land. The punishment of one wicked man or people always becomes a warning to all others.

7. *And delivered just Lot.* Gen. xix. 18. This case is incidentally referred to, to show that God makes a distinction between the righteous and the wicked; and that while the latter will be destroyed, the former will be saved. See ver. 9. Lot is called *just*, because he preserved himself uncontaminated amidst the surrounding wickedness. As long as he lived in Sodom he maintained the character of an upright and holy man. ¶ *Vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked.* By the corrupt and licentious conduct of the wicked around him. On the word *conversation*, see Notes, Phil. i. 27. The original phrase, which is rendered *filthy*, has reference to licentiousness. The corruption of Sodom was open and shameless; and as Lot was compelled to see much of it, his

8 (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from

day to day with *their* unlawful deeds;)

9 The Lord knoweth how to ^a do—
a Ps. 34.15-18.

heart was pained. The word here rendered *vexed*, means that he was wearied or burdened. The crimes of those around him he found it hard to bear with.

8. *For that righteous man dwelling among them.* The Latin Vulgate renders this, 'For in seeing and hearing he was just;' meaning that he maintained his uprightness, or that he did not become contaminated by the vices of Sodom. Many expositors have supposed that this is the correct rendering; but the most natural and the most common explanation is that which is found in our version. According to that, the meaning is, that compelled as he was, while living among them, to see and to hear what was going on, his soul was constantly troubled. ¶ *In seeing and hearing.* Seeing their open acts of depravity, and hearing their vile conversation. The effect which this had on the mind of Lot is not mentioned in Genesis, but nothing is more probable than the statement here made by Peter. Whether this statement was founded on tradition, or whether it is a suggestion of inspiration to the mind of Peter, cannot be determined. The words rendered *seeing* and *hearing* may refer to the act of seeing, or to the object seen. Wetstein and Robinson suppose that they refer here to the latter, and that the sense is, that he was troubled by what he saw and heard. The meaning is not materially different. Those who live among the wicked are compelled to see and hear much that pains their hearts, and it is well if they do not become indifferent to it, or contaminated by it. *Vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds.* Tortured or tormented his soul—*ἰβανίζεν*. Comp. Matt. viii. 6, 29; Luke viii. 28; Rev. ix. 5; xi. 10; xiv. 10; xx. 10, where the same word is rendered *tormented*. The use of this word would seem to imply that there was something *active* on the part of Lot which produced this distress on account of their conduct. He was not merely troubled as if his soul were passively

acted on, but there were strong mental exercises of a positive kind, arising perhaps from anxious solicitude how he might prevent their evil conduct, or from painful reflections on the consequences of their deeds to themselves, or from earnest pleadings in their behalf before God, or from reproofs and warnings of the wicked. At all events, the language is such as would seem to indicate that he was not a mere passive observer of their conduct. This, it would seem, was 'from day to day;' that is, it was constant. There were doubtless reasons why Lot should remain among such a people, and why, when he might so easily have done it, he did not remove to another place. Perhaps it was one purpose of his remaining to endeavour to do them good, as it is often the duty of good men now to reside among the wicked for the same purpose. Lot is supposed to have resided in Sodom—then probably the most corrupt place on the earth—for sixteen years; and we have in that fact an instructive demonstration that a good man *may* maintain the life of religion in his soul when surrounded by the wicked, and an illustration of the effects which the conduct of the wicked will have on a man of true piety when he is compelled to witness it constantly. We may learn from the record made of Lot what those effects will be, and what is evidence that one *is* truly pious who lives among the wicked. (1.) He will not be *contaminated* with their wickedness, or will not conform to their evil customs. (2.) He will not become *indifferent* to it, but his heart will be more and more affected by their depravity. Comp. Ps. cxix. 136; Luke xix. 41; Acts xvii. 16. (3.) He will have not only constant, but growing solicitude in regard to it—solicitude that will be felt every day: 'He vexed his soul *from day to day*.' It will not only be at intervals that his mind will be affected by their conduct, but it will be an habitual and constant thing. True piety is not fitful, periodical, and spasmodic; it is constant and steady. It

liver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve ^a the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:

10 But chiefly them ^b that walk after the flesh in the lust of unclean-

ness, and despise ¹ government: presumptuous *are they*, self-willed; they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.^c

^a Jude 14, 15.

^b He. 13. 4.

¹ Or, dominion.

^c Jude 8, 10.

is not a *jet* that occasionally bursts out; it is a fountain always flowing. (4.) He will seek to do them good. We may suppose that this was the case with Lot; we are certain that it is a characteristic of true religion to seek to do good to all, however wicked they may be. (5.) He will secure their confidence. He will practise no improper arts to do this, but it will be one of the usual results of a life of integrity, that a good man will secure the confidence of even the wicked. It does not appear that Lot lost that confidence, and the whole narrative in Genesis leads us to suppose that even the inhabitants of Sodom regarded him as a good man. The wicked may *hate* a good man because he is good; but if a man lives as he should, they will regard him as upright, and they will give him the credit of it when he dies, if they should withhold it while he lives.

9. *The Lord knoweth, &c.* That is, the cases referred to show that God is able to deliver his people when tempted, and understands the best way in which it should be done. He sees a way to do it when we cannot, though it is often a way which we should not have thought of. He can send an angel to take his tempted people by the hand; he can interpose and destroy the power of the tempter; he can raise up earthly friends; he can deliver his people completely and for ever from temptation, by their removal to heaven. ¶ *And to reserve the unjust.* As he does the rebel angels, ver. 4. The case of the angels shows that God can keep wicked men, as if under bonds, reserved for their final trial at his bar. Though they seem to go at large, yet they are under his control, and are kept by him with reference to their ultimate arraignment.

10. *But chiefly.* That is, it may be presumed that the principles just laid down would be applicable in an eminent degree to such persons as he proceeds to designate. ¶ *That walk after the flesh.* That live for the indulgence of their

carnal appetites. Notes, Rom. viii. 1. ¶ *In the lust of uncleanness.* In polluted pleasures. Comp. Notes, ver. 2. ¶ *And despise government.* Marg., *dominion.* That is, they regard all government in the state, the church, and the family, as an evil. Advocates for unbridled freedom of all sorts; declaimers on liberty and on the evils of oppression; defenders of what they regard as the rights of injured man, and yet secretly themselves lusting for the exercise of the very power which they would deny to others—they make no just distinctions about what constitutes true freedom, and in their zeal array themselves against government in all forms. No topic of declamation would be more popular than this, and from none would they hope to secure more followers; for if they could succeed in removing all respect for the just restraints of law, the way would be open for the accomplishment of their own purposes, in setting up a dominion over the minds of others. It is a common result of such views, that men of this description become impatient of the government of God himself, and seek to throw off *all* authority, and to live in the unrestrained indulgence of their vicious propensities. ¶ *Presumptuous are they.* Τολμηταί—daring, bold, audacious, presumptuous men. ¶ *Self-willed—αἰσίδους.* See Notes, Titus i. 7. ¶ *They are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.* The word rendered *dignities* here, (δῖκας,) means properly honour, glory, splendour; then that which is fitted to inspire respect; that which is dignified or exalted. It is applied here to men of exalted rank; and the meaning is, that they did not regard rank, or station, or office—thus violating the plainest rules of propriety and of religion. See Notes, Acts xxiii. 4, 5. Jude, between whose language and that of Peter in this chapter there is a remarkable resemblance, has expressed this more fully. He says, (ver.

11 Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation ¹ against them before the Lord.

12 But these, as natural brute

¹ Some read, *against themselves*.

8,) 'These filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.' It is one of the effects of religion to produce respect for superiors; but when men are self-willed, and when they purpose to give indulgence to corrupt propensities, it is natural for them to dislike all government. Accordingly, it is by no means an unfrequent effect of certain forms of error to lead men to speak disrespectfully of those in authority, and to attempt to throw off all the restraints of law. It is a very certain indication that men hold wrong opinions when they show disrespect to those in authority, and despise the restraints of law.

11. *Whereas angels.* The object, by the reference to angels here, is to show that they, even when manifesting the greatest zeal in a righteous cause, and even when opposing others, did not make use of reproachful terms, or of harsh and violent language. It is not known precisely to what Peter alludes here, nor on what the statement here is based. There can be little doubt, however, as Benson has remarked, that, from the strong resemblance between what Peter says and what Jude says, (Jude 9, 10,) there is allusion to the same thing, and probably both referred to some common tradition among the Jews respecting the contention of the archangel Michael with the devil about the body of Moses. See Notes, Jude 9. As the statement in Jude is the most full, it is proper to explain the passage before us by a reference to that; and we may suppose that, though Peter uses the plural term, and speaks of *angels*, yet that he really had the case of Michael in his eye, and meant to refer to that as an example of what the angels do. Whatever may have been the origin of this tradition, no one can doubt that what is here said of the angels accords with probability, and no one can prove that it is not true. ¶ *Which are greater in power and*

beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption;

a Je. 12.3.

might. And who might, therefore, if it were in any case proper, speak freely of things of an exalted rank and dignity. It would be more becoming for them than for men. On this difficult passage, see Notes on Jude 9. ¶ *Bring not railing accusation.* They simply say, 'The Lord rebuke thee,' Jude 9. Comp. Zech. iii. 2. The Greek here is, 'bring not blasphemous or reproachful judgment, or condemnation'—βλασφημιῶν καὶ κρίσεων. They abhor all scurrility and violence of language; they simply state matters as they are. No one can doubt that this accords with what we should expect of the angels; and that if they had occasion to speak of those who were opposers, it would be in a calm and serious manner, not seeking to overwhelm them by reproaches. ¶ *Against them.* Margin, *against themselves*. So the Vulgate. The more correct reading is *against them*; that is, against those who might be regarded as their adversaries, (Jude 9,) or those of their own rank who had done wrong—the fallen angels. ¶ *Before the Lord.* When standing before the Lord; or when represented as reporting the conduct of evil spirits. Comp. Zech. iii. 1, 2. This phrase, however, is wanting in many manuscripts. See Wetstein.

12. *But these, as natural brute beasts.* These persons, who resemble so much irrational animals which are made to be taken and destroyed. The *point* of the comparison is, that they are like fierce and savage beasts that exercise no control over their appetites, and that *seem* to be made only to be destroyed. These persons, by their fierce and ungovernable passions, appear to be made only for destruction, and rush blindly on to it. The word rendered *natural*, (which, however, is wanting in several manuscripts,) means *as they are by nature*, following the bent of their natural appetites and passions. The idea is, that they exercised no more restraint over their passions than beasts

13 And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they ^a that count it pleasure to riot in the day-

^a Phil. 3.19; Jude 13, &c.

do over their propensities. They were entirely under the dominion of their natural appetites, and did not allow their reason or conscience to exert any constraint. The word rendered *brute*, means without reason; irrational. Man has reason, and should allow it to control his passions; the brutes have no rational nature, and it is to be expected that they will act out their propensities without restraint. Man, as an animal, has many passions and appetites resembling those of the brute creation, but he is also endowed with a higher nature, which is designed to regulate and control his inferior propensities, and to keep them in subordination to the requirements of law. If a man sinks himself to the level of brutes, he must expect to be treated like brutes; and as wild and savage animals—lions, and panthers, and wolves, and bears—are regarded as dangerous, and as ‘made to be taken and destroyed,’ so the same destiny must come upon men who make themselves like them. ¶ *Made to be taken and destroyed.* They are not only useless to society, but destructive; and men feel that it is right to destroy them. We are not to suppose that this teaches that the only object which God had in view in making wild animals was that they *might* be destroyed; but that men so regard them. ¶ *Speak evil of the things that they understand not.* Of objects whose worth and value they cannot appreciate. This is no uncommon thing among men, especially in regard to the works and ways of God. ¶ *And shall utterly perish in their own corruption.* Their views will be the means of their ruin; and they render them fit for it, just as much as the fierce passions of the wild animals do.

13. And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness. The appropriate recompense of their wickedness in the future world. Such men do not always receive the due recompense of their deeds in the present life; and as it is a great and immutable principle that all will be

time. Spots *they are* and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings, while they feast with you;

treated, under the government of God, as they deserve, or that justice will be rendered to every rational being, it follows that there must be punishment in the future state. ¶ *As they that count it pleasure to riot in the day-time.* As men peculiarly wicked, shameless, and abandoned; for only such revel in open day. Comp. Notes, Acts ii. 15; 1 Thess. v. 7. ¶ *Spots they are and blemishes.* That is, they are like a dark spot on a pure garment, or like a deformity on an otherwise beautiful person. They are a scandal and disgrace to the Christian profession. ¶ *Sporting themselves.* The Greek word here means to live delicately or luxuriously; to revel. The idea is not exactly that of *sporting*, or playing, or amusing themselves; but it is that they take advantage of their views to live in riot and luxury. Under the garb of the Christian profession, they give indulgence to the most corrupt passions. ¶ *With their own deceivings.* Jude, in the parallel place, (ver. 12,) has, ‘These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you.’ Several versions, and a few manuscripts also, here read *feasts* instead of *deceivings*, (ἀγῶναις for ἀπάταις.) The common reading, however, is undoubtedly the correct one, (see Wetstein, *in loc.*;) and the meaning is, that they took advantage of their false views to turn even the sacred feasts of charity, or perhaps the Lord’s Supper itself, into an occasion of sensual indulgence. Comp. Notes, 1 Cor. xi. 20–22. The difference between these persons, and those in the church at Corinth, seems to have been that these did it of design, and for the purpose of leading others into sin; those who were in the church at Corinth erred through ignorance. ¶ *While they feast with you.* συνωχούμενοι. This word means to feast several together; to feast with any one; and the reference seems to be to some festival which was celebrated by Christians, where men and women were assembled together, (ver. 14,) and where they could convert the festival into a

14 Having eyes full of ¹adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children;

¹ an adulteress.

scene of riot and disorder. If the Lord's Supper was celebrated by them as it was at Corinth, that would furnish such an occasion; or if it was preceded by a 'feast of charity,' (Notes, Jude 12,) that would furnish such an occasion. It would seem to be probable that a festival of some kind was connected with the observance of the Lord's Supper, (Notes, 1 Cor. xi. 21,) and that this was converted by these persons into a scene of riot and disorder.

14. *Having eyes full of adultery.* Marg., as in the Greek, *an adulteress*; that is, gazing with desire after such persons. The word *full* is designed to denote that the corrupt passion referred to had wholly seized and occupied their minds. The eye was, as it were, full of this passion; it saw nothing else but some occasion for its indulgence; it expressed nothing else but the desire. The reference here is to the sacred festival mentioned in the previous verse; and the meaning is, that they celebrated that festival with licentious feelings, giving free indulgence to their corrupt desires by gazing on the females who were assembled with them. In the passion here referred to, the *eye* is usually the first offender, the inlet to corrupt desires, and the medium by which they are expressed. Comp. Notes, Matt. v. 28. The wanton glance is a principal occasion of exciting the sin; and there is much often in dress, and mien, and gesture, to charm the eye and to deepen the debasing passion. ¶ *And that cannot cease from sin.* They cannot look on the females who may be present without sinning. Comp. Matt. v. 28. There are many men in whom the presence of the most virtuous woman only excites impure and corrupt desires. The expression here does not mean that they have no natural ability to cease from sin, or that they are impelled to it by any physical necessity, but only that they are so corrupt and unprincipled that they certainly will sin always.

15 Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam ^a the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;

^a Nu. 22 5, &c.

¶ *Beguiling unstable souls.* Those who are not strong in Christian principle, or who are naturally fluctuating and irresolute. The word rendered *beguiling* means to bait, to entrap, and would be applicable to the methods practised in hunting. Here it means that it was one of their arts to place specious allurements before those who were known not to have settled principles or firmness, in order to allure them to sin. Comp. 2 Tim. iii. 6. ¶ *An heart they have exercised with covetous practices.* Skilled in the arts which covetous men adopt in order to cheat others out of their property. A leading purpose which influenced these men was to obtain money. One of the most certain ways for dishonest men to do this is to make use of the religious principle; to corrupt and control the conscience; to make others believe that they are eminently holy, or that they are the special favourites of heaven; and when they can do this, they have the purses of others at command. For the religious principle is the most powerful of all principles; and he who can control that, can control all that a man possesses. The idea here is, that these persons had made this their study, and had learned the ways in which men could be induced to part with their money under religious pretences. We should always be on our guard when professedly religious teachers propose to have much to do with money matters. While we should always be ready to aid every good cause, yet we should remember that unprincipled and indolent men often assume the mask of religion that they may practise their arts on the credulity of others, and that their real aim is to obtain their property, not to save their souls. ¶ *Cursed children.* This is a Hebraism, meaning literally, 'children of the curse;' that is, persons devoted to the curse, or who will certainly be destroyed.

15. *Which have forsaken the right way.* The straight path of honesty and

16 But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass, speaking with

integrity. Religion is often represented as a straight path, and to do wrong is to go out of that path in a crooked way. ¶ *Following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor.* See Numb. xxii. 5, seq. In the Book of Numbers, Balaam is called the son of *Beor*. Perhaps the name *Beor* was corrupted into *Bosor*; or, as Rosenmüller suggests, the father of Balaam may have had two names. Schleusner (*Lex.*) supposes that it was changed by the Greeks because it was more easily pronounced. The Seventy, however, read it *Beor* — *Beor*. The meaning here is, that they imitated Balaam. The particular point to which Peter refers in which they imitated him, seems to have been the love of gain, or covetousness. Possibly, however, he might have designed to refer to a more general resemblance, for *in fact* they imitated him in the following things: (1,) in being professed religious teachers, or the servants of God; (2,) in their covetousness; (3,) in inducing others to sin, referring to the same kind of sins in both cases. Balaam counselled the Moabites to entice the children of Israel to illicit connection with their women, thus introducing licentiousness into the camp of the Hebrews, (Numb. xxxi. 16; comp. Numb. xxv. 1-9;) and in like manner these teachers led others into licentiousness, thus corrupting the church. ¶ *Who loved the wages of unrighteousness.* Who was supremely influenced by the love of gain, and was capable of being employed, for a price, in a wicked design; thus prostituting his high office, as a professed prophet of the Most High, to base and ignoble ends. That Balaam, though he professed to be influenced by a supreme regard to the will of God, (Numb. xxii. 18, 38,) was really influenced by the desire of reward, and was willing to prostitute his great office to secure such a reward, there can be no doubt. (1.) The elders of Moab and of Midian came to Balaam with 'the rewards of divination in their hand,' (Numb. xxii. 7,) and with promises from Balak of promoting him to great honour, if he would curse the children of Israel, Numb. xxii. 17.

man's voice, forbad the madness of the prophet.

(2.) Balaam was disposed to go with them, and was restrained from going at once only by a direct and solemn prohibition from the Lord, Numb. xxii. 11. (3.) Notwithstanding this solemn prohibition, and notwithstanding he said to the ambassadors from Balak that he would do only as God directed, though Balak should give him his house full of silver and gold, (Numb. xxii. 18,) yet he did not regard the matter as settled, but proposed to them that they should wait another night, with the hope that the Lord would give a more favourable direction in reference to their request, thus showing that his *heart* was in the service which they required, and that his inclination was to avail himself of their offer, Numb. xxii. 19. (4.) When he *did* obtain permission to go, it was only to say that which the Lord should direct him to say, (Numb. xxii. 20;) but he went with a 'perverse' heart, with a secret wish to comply with the desire of Balak, and with a knowledge that he was doing wrong, (Numb. xxii. 34,) and was restrained from uttering the curse which Balak desired only by an influence from above which he could not control. Balaam was undoubtedly a wicked man, and was constrained by a power from on high to utter sentiments which God *meant* should be uttered, but which Balaam would never have expressed of his own accord.

16. *But was rebuked for his iniquity.* The object of Peter in this seems to be to show that God employed the very extraordinary means of causing the ass on which he rode to speak, because his iniquity was so monstrous. The guilt of thus debasing his high office, and going forth to curse the people of God—a people who had done him no wrong, and given no occasion for his malediction—was so extraordinary, that means as extraordinary were proper to express it. If God employed means so extraordinary to rebuke *his* depravity, it was to be expected that in some appropriate way he would express his sense of the wickedness of those who resembled him. ¶ *The dumb ass, speaking with man's voice.* Numb. xxii. 28. God seems to

17 These are wells without water, clouds ^a that are carried with a

^a Ep. 4. 14.

have designed that both Balaam and Balak should be convinced that the children of Israel were his people ; and so important was it that this conviction should rest fully on the minds of the nations through whom they passed, that he would not suffer even a pretended prophet to make use of his influence to curse them. He designed that all that influence should be in favour of the cause of truth, thus furnishing a striking instance of the use which he often makes of wicked men. To convince Balaam of the error of his course, and to make him sensible that God was an observer of his conduct, and to induce him to utter only what he should direct, nothing would be better fitted than this miracle. The very animal on which he rode, dumb and naturally stupid, was made to utter a reproof ; a reproof as directly from heaven as though the stones had cried out beneath his feet, or the trees of the wood had uttered the language of remonstrance. As to the nature of the miracle here referred to, it may be remarked, (1,) that it was as easy for God to perform this miracle as any other ; and (2,) that it was a miracle that would be as likely to be effectual, and to answer the purpose, as any other. No man can show that it could *not* have occurred ; and the occasion was one in which some decided rebuke, in language beyond that of conscience, was necessary. ¶ *Forbade the madness of the prophet.* That is, the mad or perverse design of the prophet. The word here rendered *madness* means, properly, being aside from a right mind. It is not found elsewhere in the New Testament. It is used here to denote that Balaam was engaged in an enterprise which indicated a headstrong disposition ; an acting contrary to reason and sober sense. He was so under the influence of avarice and ambition that his sober sense was blinded, and he acted like a madman. He knew indeed what was right, and had professed a purpose to do what was right, but he did not allow that to control him ; but, for the sake of gain, went against his own sober conviction,

tempest ; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.

and against what he knew to be the will of God. He was so mad or infatuated that he allowed neither reason, nor conscience, nor the will of God, to control him.

17. *These are wells without water.* Jude (12, 13) employs several other epithets to describe the same class of persons. The language employed both by Peter and Jude is singularly terse, pointed, and emphatic. Nothing to an oriental mind would be more expressive than to say of professed religious teachers, that they were 'wells without water.' It was always a sad disappointment to a traveller in the hot sands of the desert to come to a well where it was expected that water might be found, and to find it dry. It only aggravated the trials of the thirsty and weary traveller. Such were these religious teachers. In a world, not unaptly compared, in regard to its real comforts, to the wastes and sands of the desert, they would only grievously disappoint the expectations of all those who were seeking for the refreshing influences of the truths of the gospel. There are many such teachers in the world. ¶ *Clouds that are carried with a tempest.* Clouds that are driven about by the wind, and that send down no rain upon the earth. They promise rain, only to be followed by disappointment. Substantially the same idea is conveyed by this as by the previous phrase. 'The Arabs compare persons who put on the appearance of virtue, when yet they are destitute of all goodness, to a light cloud which makes a show of rain, and afterwards vanishes.'—*Benson*. The sense is this : The cloud, as it rises, promises rain. The expectation of the farmer is excited that the thirsty earth is to be refreshed with needful showers. Instead of this, however, the wind 'gets into' the cloud ; it is driven about, and no rain falls, or it ends in a destructive tornado which sweeps everything before it. So of these religious teachers. Instruction in regard to the way of salvation was expected from them ; but, instead of that, they disappointed the expectations of those who were desirous of

18 For when they speak ^a great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through

^a Pa. 73.8.

knowing the way of life, and their doctrines only tended to destroy. ¶ *To whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.* The word rendered *mist* here, (*ζέφος*.) means properly muskiness, thick gloom, darkness, (see ver. 4;) and the phrase 'mist of darkness' is designed to denote *intense* darkness, or the thickest darkness. It refers undoubtedly to the place of future punishment, which is often represented as a place of intense darkness. See Notes, Matt. viii. 12. When it is said that this is *reserved* for them, it means that it is *prepared* for them, or is kept in a state of readiness to receive them. It is like a jail or penitentiary which is built in anticipation that there will be criminals, and with the expectation that there will be use for it. So God has constructed the great prison-house of the universe, the world where the wicked are to dwell, with the knowledge that there would be occasion for it; and so he keeps it from age to age that it may be ready to receive the wicked when the sentence of condemnation shall be passed upon them. Comp. Matt. xxv. 41. The word *for ever* is a word which denotes properly eternity, (*εις αἰῶνα*.) and is such a word as could not have been used if it had been meant that they would not suffer for ever. Comp. Notes, Matt. xxv. 46.

18. *For when they speak great swelling words of vanity.* When they make pretensions to wisdom and learning, or seem to attach great importance to what they say, and urge it in a pompous and positive manner. Truth is simple, and delights in simple statements. It expects to make its way by its own intrinsic force, and is willing to pass for what it is worth. Error is noisy and declamatory, and hopes to succeed by substituting sound for sense, and by such tones and arts as shall induce men to believe that what is said is true, when it is known by the speaker to be false. ¶ *They allure through the lusts of the flesh.* The same word is used here which in ver. 14 is rendered *beguiling*, and in James i. 14. *enticed*. It does not else-

much wantonness, those that were clean¹ escaped from them who live in error.

¹ Or, for a little while, as some read.

where occur in the New Testament. It means that they make use of deceitful arts to allure, ensnare, or beguile others. The *means* which it is here said they employed, were *the lusts of the flesh*; that is, they promised unlimited indulgence to the carnal appetites, or taught such doctrines that their followers would feel themselves free to give unrestrained liberty to such propensities. This has been quite a common method in the world, of inducing men to embrace false doctrines. ¶ *Through much wantonness.* See Notes, 2 Tim. iii. 6. The meaning here is, that they made use of every variety of lascivious arts to beguile others under religious pretences. This has been often done in the world; for religion has been abused to give seducers access to the confidence of the innocent, only that they might betray and ruin them. It is *right* that for all such the 'mist of darkness should be reserved for ever;' and if there were not a place of punishment prepared for such men, there would be defect in the moral administration of the universe. ¶ *Those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.* Marg., *for a little while.* The difference between the margin and the text here arises from a difference of reading in the Greek. Most of the later editions of the Greek Testament coincide with the reading in the margin, (*λίγως*.) meaning *little, but a little, scarcely*. This accords better with the scope of the passage; and, according to this, it means that they had *almost escaped* from the snares and influences of those who live in error and sin. They had begun to think of their ways; they had broken off many of their evil habits; and there was hope that they would be entirely reformed, and would become decided Christians, but they were allured again to the sins in which they had so long indulged. This seems to me to accord with the design of the passage, and it certainly accords with what frequently occurs, that those who are addicted to habits of vice become apparently in-

19 While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage

20 For if after they have escaped

α Jn. 8.34; Ro. 6.16.

terested in religion, and abandon many of their evil practices, but are again allured by the seductive influences of sin, and relapse into their former habits. In the case referred to here it was by professedly religious teachers—and is this never done now? Are there none, for example, who have been addicted to habits of intemperance, who had been almost reformed, but who are led back again by the influence of religious teachers? Not directly and openly, indeed, would they lead them into habits of intemperance. But, when their reformation is begun, its success and its completion depend on total abstinence from all that intoxicates. In this condition, nothing more is necessary to secure their entire reformation and safety than mere abstinence; and nothing more may be necessary to lead them into their former practices than the example of others who indulge in moderate drinking, or than the doctrine inculcated by a religious teacher that such moderate drinking is not contrary to the spirit of the Bible.

19. *While they promise them liberty.* True religion always promises and produces liberty, (see Notes, John viii. 36;) but the particular liberty which these persons seem to have promised, was freedom from what they regarded as needless restraint, or from strict and narrow views of religion. ¶ *They themselves are the servants of corruption.* They are the slaves of gross and corrupt passions, themselves utter strangers to freedom, and bound in the chains of servitude. These passions and appetites have obtained the entire mastery over them, and brought them into the severest bondage. This is often the case with those who deride the restraints of serious piety. They are themselves the slaves of appetite, or of the rules of fashionable life, or of the laws of honour, or of vicious indulgences. 'He

the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

δ Lu. 11.26; Heb. 6.4, &c.; 10.26, 27.

is a freeman whom the truth makes free, and all are slaves besides.' Comp. Notes, 2 Cor. iii. 17. ¶ *For of whom a man is overcome, &c.* Or rather 'by what (α) any one is overcome;' that is, *whatever* gets the mastery of him, whether it be avarice, or sensuality, or pride, or any form of error. See Notes, Rom. vi. 16, where this sentiment is explained.

20. *For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world.* This does not necessarily mean that they had been true Christians, and had fallen from grace. Men may outwardly reform, and escape from the open corruptions which prevail around them, or which they had themselves practised, and still have no true grace at heart. ¶ *Through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* Neither does this imply that they were true Christians, or that they had ever had any saving knowledge of the Redeemer. There is a knowledge of the doctrines and duties of religion which may lead sinners to abandon their outward vices, which has no connection with saving grace. They may profess religion, and may know enough of religion to understand that it requires them to abandon their vicious habits, and still never be true Christians. ¶ *They are again entangled therein and overcome.* The word rendered *entangled*, (εμπίπας,) from which is derived our word *implicate*, means to braid in, to interweave; then to involve in, to entangle. It means here that they become implicated in those vices like an animal that is entangled in a net. ¶ *The latter end is worse with them than the beginning.* This is usually the case. Apostates become worse than they were before their professed conversion. Reformed drunkards, if they go back to their 'cups' again, become more abandoned than ever. Thus it is with those who

21 For it had been better ^afor them not to have known the way of ^brighteousness, than, after they have known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

^a Mat. 11. 23, 24; Lu. 12. 47, 48.

have been addicted to any habits of vice, and who profess to become religious, and then fall away. The *reasons* of this may be, (1.) that they are willing now to show to others that they are no longer under the restraints by which they had professedly bound themselves; (2.) that God gives them up to indulgence with fewer restraints than formerly; and (3.) their old companions in sin may be at special pains to court their society, and to lead them into temptation, in order to obtain a triumph over virtue and religion.

21. *For it had been better for them, &c.* Comp. Notes on Matt. xxvi. 24. It would have been better for them, for (1) then they would not have dishonoured the cause of religion as they have now done; (2) they would not have sunk so deep in profligacy as they now have; and (3) they would not have incurred so aggravated a condemnation in the world of woe. If men are resolved on being wicked, they had better never pretend to be good. If they are to be cast off at last, it had better not be as apostates from the cause of virtue and religion.

22. *But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb.* The meaning of the proverbs here quoted is, that they have returned to their former vile manner of life. Under all the appearances of reformation, still their evil nature remained, as really as that of the dog or the swine, and that nature finally prevailed. There was no thorough internal change, any more than there is in the swine when it is washed, or in the dog. This passage, therefore, would seem to demonstrate that there never had been any real change of heart, and of course there had been no falling away from true religion. It should not, therefore, be quoted to prove that true Christians may fall from grace and perish. The dog and the swine had never been anything else than the dog and the swine, and these persons had never been

22 But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, *‘The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire.*

^b Pr. 12. 28.

^c Pr. 26. 11.

anything else than sinners. ¶ *The dog is turned to his own vomit again.* That is, to eat it up. The passage would seem to imply, that whatever pains should be taken to change the habits of the dog, he would return to them again. The quotation here is from Prov. xxvi. 11: ‘As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly.’ A similar proverb is found in the Rabbinical writers. Of the truth of the disgusting *fact* here affirmed of the dog, there can be no doubt. Phaedrus (Fab. 27.) states a fact still more offensive respecting its habits. In the view of the Orientals, the dog was reckoned among the most vile and disgusting of all animals. Comp. Deut. xxiii. 18; 1 Sam. xvii. 43; 2 Sam. iii. 8; ix. 8; xvi. 9; Matt. vii. 6; Phil. iii. 2. See also Horace, II. Epis. 1, 26:—

Vixisset canis immundus, vel amica luto sus.

On the use of this proverb, see Wetstein, *in loc.* ¶ *And the sow that was washed, &c.* This proverb is not found in the Old Testament, but it was common in the Rabbinical writings, and is found in the Greek classics. See Wetstein, *in loc.* Its meaning is plain, and of the truth of what is affirmed no one can have any doubt. No matter how clean the swine is made by washing, this would not prevent it, in the slightest degree, from rolling in filth again. It will act out its real nature. So it is with the sinner. No external reformation will certainly prevent his returning to his former habits; and when he *does* return, we can only say that he is acting according to his real nature—a nature which has never been changed, any more than the nature of the dog or the swine. On the *characteristics* of the persons referred to in this chapter, (vers. 9–19,) see the Introduction, § 3.

This passage is often quoted to prove ‘the possibility of falling from grace, and from a very high degree of it too.’ But it is one of the last passages in the

CHAPTER III.

THIS second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both

which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance :

2 That ye may be mindful of

α Jude 17, 18.

Bible that should be adduced to prove that doctrine. The true point of this passage is to show that the persons referred to never *were* changed; that whatever external reformation might have occurred, their nature remained the same; and that when they apostatized from their outward profession, they merely acted out their nature, and showed that in fact there had been no real change. This passage will prove—what there are abundant facts to confirm—that persons may reform externally, and then return again to their former corrupt habits; it can never be made to prove that one *true* Christian will fall away and perish. It will also prove that we should rely on no mere external reformation, no outward cleansing, as certain evidence of piety. Thousands who have been externally reformed have ultimately shown that they had no religion, and there is nothing in mere outward reformation that can fit us for heaven. God looks upon the heart; and it is only the religion that has its seat there, that can secure our final salvation.

CHAPTER III.

ANALYSIS OF THE CHAPTER.

THE principal design of this chapter is to demonstrate, in opposition to the objections of scoffers, that the Lord Jesus will return again to this world; that the world will be destroyed by fire, and that there will be a new heaven and a new earth; and to show what effect this should have on the minds of Christians. The chapter, without any very exact arrangement by the author, essentially consists of two parts.

I. The argument of the objectors to the doctrine that the Lord Jesus will return to the world, and that it will be destroyed, vers. 1-4. In doing this, the apostle (vers. 1, 2) calls their attention to the importance of attending diligently to the things which had been spoken by the prophets, and to the commands of the apostles, reminding them that it was to be expected that in the last days there would be scoffers who

would deride the doctrines of religion, and who would maintain that there was no evidence that what had been predicted would be fulfilled, ver. 3. He then (ver. 4) adverts to the *argument* on which they professed to rely, that there were no signs or indications that those events were to take place; that there were no natural causes in operation which could lead to such results; and that the fact of the stability of the earth since the time of the creation, demonstrated that the predicted destruction of the world could not occur.

II. The argument of Peter, in reply to this objection; a strong affirmation of the truth of the doctrine that the Lord Jesus will return; that the earth and all which it contains will be burned up; that there will be a new heaven and a new earth; and the effect which the prospect of the coming of the Lord Jesus, and of the destruction of the world by fire, should have on the minds of Christians, vers. 5-18.

(1.) The arguments of Peter, in reply to the objection from the long-continued stability of the earth, are the following: (a) He refers to the destruction of the old world by the flood—a fact against which the same objections could have been urged, beforehand, which are urged against the predicted destruction of the world by fire, vers. 5-7. With just as much plausibility it might have been urged then that the earth had stood for thousands of years, and that there were no natural causes at work to produce that change. It might have been asked where the immense amount of water necessary to drown a world could come from; and perhaps it might have been argued that God was too *good* to destroy a world by a flood. Every objection which could be urged to the destruction of the world by fire, could have been urged to its destruction by water; and as, in fact, those objections, as the event showed, would have had no real force, so they should be regarded as having no real force now. (b) No argument against this predicted event can be

the words which were spoken before
by the holy prophets, and of the

α 1 TI. 4. 1; 5 TI. 3. 1.

derived from the fact that hundreds and thousands of years are suffered to elapse before the fulfilment of the predictions, vers. 8, 9. What seems long to men is not long to God. A thousand years with him, in reference to this point, are as one day. He does not measure time as men do. They soon die; and if they cannot execute their purpose in a brief period, they cannot at all. But this cannot apply to God. He has infinite ages in which to execute his purposes, and therefore no argument can be derived from the fact that his purposes are long delayed, to prove that he will not execute them at all. (c) Peter says (ver. 15, seq.) that the delay which was observed in executing the plans of God should not be interpreted as a proof that they would *never* be accomplished, but as an evidence of his long-suffering and patience; and, in illustration of this, he refers to the writings of Paul, in which he says that the same sentiments were advanced. There were indeed, he says, in those writings, some things which were hard to be understood; but on this point they were plain.

(2.) A strong affirmation of the truth of the doctrine, vers. 9, 10, 13. He declares that these events will certainly occur, and that they should be expected to take place suddenly, and without any preintimations of their approach—as the thief comes at night without announcing his coming.

(3.) The practical suggestions which Peter intersperses in the argument illustrative of the effect which these considerations should have on the mind, are among the most important parts of the chapter: (1.) We should be holy, devout, and serious, ver. 11. (2.) We should look forward with deep interest to the new heavens and earth which are to succeed the present, ver. 12. (3.) We should be diligent and watchful, that we may be found on the return of the Saviour ‘without spot and blameless,’ ver. 14. (4.) We should be cautious that we be not seduced and led away by the errors which deny these great doctrines, (ver. 17;) and (5) we

commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour:

should grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, ver. 18.

1. *This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you.* This expression

proves that he had written a former epistle, and that it was addressed to the same persons as this. Comp. Intro., § 3.

¶ *In both which I stir up your pure minds, &c.* That is, the main object of both epistles is the same—to call to your remembrance important truths which you have before heard, but which you are in danger of forgetting, or from which you are in danger of being turned away by prevailing errors. Comp. Notes, chap. i. 12–15. The word rendered *pure* (σιλικρινής) occurs only here and in Phil. i. 10, where it is rendered *sincere*. The word properly refers to *that which may be judged of in sunshine*; then it means *clear, manifest*; and then *sincere, pure*—as that in which there is no obscurity. The idea here perhaps is, that their minds were open, frank, candid, sincere, rather than that they were *pure*. The apostle regarded them as *disposed* to see the truth, and yet as liable to be led astray by the plausible errors of others. Such minds need to have truths often brought fresh to their remembrance, though they are truths with which they had before been familiar.

2. *That ye may be mindful of the words.* Of the doctrines; the truths; the prophetic statements. Jude (ver. 18) says that it had been foretold by the apostles, that in the last days there would be scoffers. Peter refers to the instructions of the apostles and prophets in general, though evidently designing that his remarks should bear particularly on the fact that there would be scoffers. ¶ *Which were spoken before by the holy prophets.* The predictions of the prophets before the advent of the Saviour, respecting his character and work. Peter had before appealed to them, (chap. i. 19–21,) as furnishing important evidence in regard to the truth of the Christian religion, and valuable instruction in reference to its nature. See Notes on that passage.

3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking^a after their own lusts,

4 And saying, Where ^{is} the

^a Isa. 5.19.

Many of the most important doctrines respecting the kingdom of the Messiah are stated as clearly in the Old Testament as in the New, (comp. Isa. liii.) and the prophecies therefore deserve to be studied as an important part of Divine revelation. It should be added here, however, that when Peter wrote there was this special reason why he referred to the prophets, that the canon of the New Testament was not then completed, and he could not make his appeal to that. To some parts of the writings of Paul he could and did appeal, (vers. 15, 16,) but probably a very small part of what is now the New Testament was known to those to whom this epistle was addressed. ¶ *And of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour.* As being equally entitled with the prophets to state and enforce the doctrines and duties of religion. It may be observed, that no man would have used this language who did not regard himself and his fellow-apostles as inspired, and as on a level with the prophets.

3. *Knowing this first.* As among the first and most important things to be attended to—as one of the predictions which demand your special regard. Jude (ver. 18) says that the fact that there would be ‘mockers in the last time,’ had been particularly foretold by them. It is probable that Peter refers to the same thing, and we may suppose that this was so well understood by all the apostles that they made it a common subject of preaching. ¶ *That there shall come in the last days.* In the last dispensation; in the period during which the affairs of the world shall be wound up. The apostle does not say that that was the last time in the sense that the world was about to come to an end; nor is it implied that the period called ‘the last day’ might not be a very long period, longer in fact than either of the previous periods of the world. He says that during that pe-

romise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of the creation.

^b Je. 17.15; Eze. 12.22-27; Mat. 24.48.

riod it had been predicted there would arise those whom he here calls *scoffers*. On the meaning of the phrase ‘in the last days,’ as used in the Scriptures, see Notes, Acts ii. 17; Heb. i. 2; Isa. ii. 2. ¶ *Scoffers.* In Jude (ver. 18) the same Greek word is rendered *mockers*. The word means those who deride, reproach, ridicule. There is usually in the word the idea of contempt or malignity towards an object. Here the sense seems to be that they would treat with derision or contempt the predictions respecting the advent of the Saviour, and the end of the world. It would appear probable that there was a particular or definite class of men referred to; a class who would hold peculiar opinions, and who would urge plausible objections against the fulfilment of the predictions respecting the end of the world, and the second coming of the Saviour—for those are the points to which Peter particularly refers. It scarcely required inspiration to foresee that there would be *scoffers* in the general sense of the term—for they have so abounded in every age, that no one would hazard much in saying that they would be found at any particular time; but the eye of the apostle is evidently on a particular class of men, the special form of whose reproaches would be the ridicule of the doctrines that the Lord Jesus would return; that there would be a day of judgment; that the world would be consumed by fire, &c. Archbishop Tillotson explains this of the Carpocratians, a large sect of the Gnostics, who denied the resurrection of the dead, and the future judgment. ¶ *Walking after their own lusts.* Living in the free indulgence of their sensual appetites. See Notes, chap. ii. 10, 12, 14, 18, 19.

4. *And saying, Where is the promise of his coming?* That is, either, Where is the fulfilment of that promise; or, Where are the indications or signs that he will come? They evidently meant

5 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that ^a by the word of God the heavens were of old, and

the earth ¹ standing out of the water ^b and in the water ;

^a Ge. 1. 6, 9.

¹ consisting.

^b Ps. 24. 2.

to imply that the promise had utterly failed ; that there was not the slightest evidence that it would be accomplished ; that they who had believed this were entirely deluded. It is possible that some of the early Christians, even in the time of the apostles, had undertaken to fix the time when these events would occur, as many have done since ; and that as *that* time had passed by, they inferred that the prediction had utterly failed. But whether this were so or not, it was easy to allege that the predictions respecting the second coming of the Saviour *seemed* to imply that the end of the world was near, and that there were no indications that they would be fulfilled. The laws of nature were uniform, as they had always been, and the alleged promises had failed. ¶ *For since the fathers fell asleep.* Since they *died*—death being often, in the Scriptures, as elsewhere, represented as sleep. Notes, John xi. 11 ; 1 Cor. xi. 30. This reference to the ‘fathers,’ by such scoffers, was probably designed to be ironical and contemptuous. Perhaps the meaning may be thus expressed: ‘Those old men, the prophets, indeed foretold this event. They were much concerned and troubled about it ; and their predictions alarmed others, and filled their bosoms with dread. They looked out for the signs of the end of the world, and expected that that day was drawing near. But those good men have died. They lived to old age, and then died as others ; and since they have departed, the affairs of the world have gone on very much as they did before. The earth is suffered to have rest, and the laws of nature operate in the same way that they always did.’ It seems not improbable that the immediate reference in the word *fathers* is not to the prophets of former times, but to aged and pious men of the times of the apostles, who had dwelt much on this subject, and who had made it a subject of conversation and of preaching. Those old men, said the scoffing objector, have died like others ; and, notwithstanding their confident predic-

tions, things now move on as they did from the beginning. ¶ *All things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.* That is, the laws of nature are fixed and settled. The *argument* here—for it was doubtless designed to be an argument—is based on the stability of the laws of nature, and the uniformity of the course of events. Thus far all these predictions had failed. Things continued to go on as they had always done. The sun rose and set ; the tides ebbed and flowed ; the seasons followed each other in the usual order ; one generation succeeded another, as had always been the case ; and there was every indication that those laws would continue to operate as they had always done. This argument for the stability of the earth, and against the prospect of the fulfilment of the predictions of the Bible, would have more force with many minds now than it had then, for eighteen hundred years more have rolled away, and the laws of nature remain the same. Meantime, the expectations of those who have believed that the world was coming to an end have been disappointed ; the time set for this by many interpreters of Scripture has passed by ; men have looked out in vain for the coming of the Saviour, and sublunary affairs move on as they always have done. Still there are no indications of the coming of the Saviour ; and perhaps it would be said that the farther men search, by the aid of science, into the laws of nature, the more they become impressed with their stability, and the more firmly they are convinced of the improbability that the world will be destroyed in the manner in which it is predicted in the Scriptures that it will be. The specious and plausible objection arising from this source, the apostle proposes to meet in the following verses.

5. *For this they willingly are ignorant of.* Λαθάνει γὰρ αὐτοὺς τοῦτο θέλοντας. There is some considerable variety in the translation of this passage. In our common version the Greek word (θέλον-

was) is rendered as if it were an adverb, or as if it referred to their *ignorance* in regard to the event; meaning, that while they might have known this fact, they took no pains to do it, or that they preferred to have its recollection far from their minds. So Beza and Luther render it. Others, however, take it as referring to what follows, meaning, 'being so minded; being of that opinion; or affirming.' So Bloomfield, Robinson, (*Lex.*) Mede, Rosenmüller, &c. According to this interpretation the sense is, 'They who thus *will* or think; that is, they who hold the opinion that all things will continue to remain as they were, are ignorant of this fact that things have *not* always thus remained; that there has been a destruction of the world once by water.' The Greek seems rather to demand this interpretation; and then the sense of the passage will be, 'It is concealed or hidden from those who hold this opinion, that the earth has been once destroyed.' It is implied, whichever interpretation is adopted, that the *will* was concerned in it; that they were influenced by that rather than by sober judgment and by reason; and whether the word refers to their *ignorance*, or to their *holding that opinion*, there was obstinacy and perverseness about it. The *will* has usually more to do in the denial and rejection of the doctrines of the Bible than the *understanding* has. The argument which the apostle appeals to in reply to this objection is a simple one. The adversaries of the doctrine affirmed that the laws of nature had always remained the same, and they affirmed that they always would. The apostle denies the fact which they assumed, in the sense in which they affirmed it, and maintains that those laws have *not* been so stable and uniform that the world has never been destroyed by an overwhelming visitation from God. It has been destroyed by a flood; it may be again by fire. There was the same improbability that the event would occur, so far as the argument from the stability of the laws of nature is concerned, in the one case that there is in the other, and consequently the objection is of no force. ¶ *That by the word of God.* By the *command* of God. 'He spake, and it

was done.' Comp. Gen. i. 3, 9; Psal. xxxiii. 9. The idea here is, that everything depends on his word or will. As the heavens and the earth were originally *made* by his command, so by the same command they can be destroyed. ¶ *The heavens were of old.* The heavens were formerly made, Gen. i. 1. The word *heaven* in the Scriptures sometimes refers to the atmosphere, sometimes to the starry worlds as they appear above us, and sometimes to the exalted place where God dwells. Here it is used, doubtless, in the popular signification, as denoting the heavens as they *appear*, embracing the sun, moon, and stars. ¶ *And the earth standing out of the water and in the water.* Marg., *consisting.* Gr., *συνιστάσα*. The Greek word, when used in an intransitive sense, means *to stand with*, or *together*; then tropically, *to place together*, to constitute, place, bring into existence.—*Robinson.* The idea which our translators seem to have had is, that, in the formation of the earth, a part was out of the water, and a part under the water; and that the former, or the inhabited portion, became entirely submerged, and that thus the inhabitants perished. This was not, however, probably the idea of Peter. He doubtless has reference to the account given in Gen. i. of the creation of the earth, in which *water* performed so important a part. The thought in his mind seems to have been, that *water* entered materially into the formation of the earth, and that in its very origin there existed the means by which it was afterwards destroyed. The word which is rendered '*standing*' should rather be rendered *consisting of*, or *constituted of*; and the meaning is, that the creation of the earth was the result of the Divine agency acting on the mass of elements which in Genesis is called *waters*, Gen. i. 2, 6, 7, 9. There was at first a vast fluid, an immense unformed collection of materials, called *waters*, and from that the earth arose. The point of time, therefore, in which Peter looks at the earth here, is not when the mountains, and continents, and islands, seem to be standing partly out of the water and partly in the water, but when there was a vast mass of materials called *waters* from which the

6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, ^aperished:

7 But the heavens and the earth

α Ge. 7.11.

which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire ^bagainst the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

β Ps. 50.3; Zep. 3.8; 2 Thess. 1.3.

earth was formed. The phrase '*out of the water*' (ἐκ ὕδατος) refers to the *origin* of the earth. It was formed *from*, or *out of*, that mass. The phrase '*in the water*' (ἐν ὕδατος) more properly means *through* or *by*. It does not mean that the earth stood *in* the water in the sense that it was partly submerged; but it means not only that the earth arose *from* that mass that is called *water* in Gen. i., but that that mass called *water* was in fact the grand material *out of* which the earth was formed. It was *through* or *by means of* that vast mass of mingled elements that the earth was made as it was. Everything arose out of that chaotic mass; through that, or by means of that, all things were formed, and from the fact that the earth was thus formed out of the water, or that water entered so essentially into its formation, there existed causes which ultimately resulted in the deluge.

6. *Whereby*. ὧν. Through which, or by means of which. The pronoun here is in the plural number, and there has been much difference of opinion as to what it refers. Some suppose that it refers to the heavens mentioned in the preceding verse, and to the fact that the windows of heaven were opened in the deluge, (*Doddridge*;) others that the Greek phrase is taken in the sense of (ὅθεν) *whence*. Wetstein supposes that it refers to the 'heavens and the earth.' But the most obvious reference, though the plural number is used, and the word *water* in the antecedent is in the singular, is to *water*. The fact seems to be that the apostle had the *waters* mentioned in Genesis prominently in his eye, and meant to describe the effect produced by those waters. He has also twice, in the same sentence, referred to *water*—'*out of the water* and *in the water*.' It is evidently to these *waters* mentioned in Genesis, out of which the world was originally made, that he refers here. The world was formed from that fluid mass; by these waters which ex-

isted when the earth was made, and out of which it arose, it was destroyed. The antecedent to the word in the plural number is rather that which was in the mind of the writer, or that of which he was thinking, than the word which he had used. ¶ *The world that then was, &c.* Including all its inhabitants. Rosenmüller supposes that the reference here is to some universal catastrophe which occurred before the deluge in the time of Noah, and indeed before the earth was fitted up in its present form, as described by Moses in Gen. i. It is rendered more than probable, by the researches of geologists in modern times, that such changes have occurred; but there is no evidence that Pater was acquainted with them, and his purpose did not require that he should refer to them. All that his argument demanded was the fact that the world had been once destroyed, and that therefore there was no improbability in believing that it would be again. They who maintained that the prediction that the earth would be destroyed was improbable, affirmed that there were no signs of such an event; that the laws of nature were stable and uniform; and that as those laws had been so long and so uniformly unbroken, it was absurd to believe that such an event could occur. To meet this, all that was necessary was to show that, in a case where the same objections substantially might be urged, it had actually occurred that the world had been destroyed. There was, in itself considered, as much improbability in believing that the world could be destroyed by water as that it would be destroyed by fire, and consequently the objection had no real force. Notwithstanding the apparent stability of the laws of nature, the world had been once destroyed; and there is, therefore, no improbability that it may be again. On the objections which *might* have been plausibly urged against the flood, see Notes on Heb. xi. 7.

7. *But the heavens and the earth which are now.* As they now exist. There is no difficulty here respecting what is meant by the word *earth*, but it is not so easy to determine precisely how much is included in the word *heavens*. It cannot be supposed to mean *heaven* as the place where God dwells; nor is it necessary to suppose that Peter understood by the word all that would now be implied in it, as used by a modern astronomer. The word is doubtless employed in a popular signification, referring to the *heavens as they appear to the eye*; and the idea is, that the conflagration would not only destroy the earth, but would change the heavens as they now appear to us. If, in fact, the earth with its atmosphere should be subjected to an universal conflagration, all that is properly implied in what is here said by Peter would occur. ¶ *By the same word.* Dependent solely on the will of God. He has only to give command, and all will be destroyed. The laws of nature have no stability independent of his will, and at his pleasure all things could be reduced to nothing, as easily as they were made. A single word, a breath of command, from one Being, a Being over whom we have no control, would spread universal desolation through the heavens and the earth. Notwithstanding the laws of nature, as they are called, and the precision, uniformity, and power with which they operate, the dependence of the universe on the Creator is as entire as though there were no such laws, and as though all were conducted by the mere will of the Most High, irrespective of such laws. In fact, those laws have no efficiency of their own, but are a mere statement of the way in which God produces the changes which occur, the methods by which He operates who 'works all in all.' At any moment he could suspend them; that is, he could cease to act, or withdraw his efficiency, and the universe would cease to be. ¶ *Are kept in store.* Gr., 'Are treasured up.' The allusion in the Greek word is to anything that is treasured up, or reserved for future use. The apostle does not say that this is the only purpose for which the heavens and the earth are preserved, but that this is *one* object, or

this is *one* aspect in which the subject may be viewed. They are like treasure reserved for future use. ¶ *Reserved unto fire.* Reserved or kept to be burned up. See Notes on ver. 10. The first mode of destroying the world was by water, the next will be by fire. That the world would at some period be destroyed by fire was a common opinion among the ancient philosophers, especially the Greek Stoics. What was the foundation of that opinion, or whence it was derived, it is impossible now to determine; but it is remarkable that it should have accorded so entirely with the statements of the New Testament. The authorities in proof that this opinion was entertained may be seen in Wetstein, *in loc.* See Seneca, N. Q. iii. 28; Cic. N. D. ii. 46; Simplicius in Arist. de Cœlo i. 9; Eusebius, P. xv. 18. It is quite remarkable that there have been among the heathen in ancient and modern times so many opinions that accord with the statements of revelation—opinions, many of them, which could not have been founded on any investigations of science among them, and which must, therefore, have been either the result of conjecture, or handed down by tradition. Whatever may have been their origin, the fact that such opinions prevailed and were believed, may be allowed to have some weight in showing that the statements in the Bible are not improbable. ¶ *Against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.* The world was destroyed by a flood on account of the wickedness of its inhabitants. It would seem from this passage that it will be destroyed by fire with reference to the same cause; at least, that its destruction by fire will involve the perdition of wicked men. It cannot be inferred from this passage that the world will be as wicked at the general conflagration as it was in the time of Noah; but the idea in the mind of Peter seems to have been, that in the destruction of the world by fire the perdition of the wicked will be involved, or will at that time occur. It also seems to be implied that the fire will accomplish an important agency in that destruction, as the water did on the old world. It is not said, in the passage before us, whether those to be destroyed will be

8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a ^c thousand years as one day.

9 The Lord is not slack ^b con-

^a Ps. 90. 4.

^b Ha 2. 3.

cerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering ^c to us-ward, not willing ^d that any should perish, but that all should ^e come to repentance.

^c Ps. 86. 15; Is. 30. 18.

^d 1 Pe. 3. 11.

^e 1 Ti. 2. 4.

living at that time, or will be raised up from the dead, nor have we any means of determining what was the idea of Peter on that point. All that the passage essentially teaches is, that the world is reserved now with reference to such a consummation by fire; that is, that there are elements kept in store that may be enkindled into an universal conflagration, and that such a conflagration will be attended with the destruction of the wicked.

8. *But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years.* This (vers. 8, 9) is the second consideration by which the apostle meets the objection of scoffers against the doctrine of the second coming of the Saviour. The objection was, that much time, and perhaps the time which had been supposed to be set for his coming, had passed away, and still all things remained as they were. The reply of the apostle is, that no argument could be drawn from this, for that which may seem to be a long time to us is a brief period with God. In the infinity of his own duration there is abundant time to accomplish his designs, and it can make no difference with him whether they are accomplished in one day or extended to a thousand years. Man has but a short time to live, and if he does not accomplish his purposes in a very brief period, he never will. But it is not so with God. He always lives; and we cannot therefore infer, because the execution of his purposes seems to be delayed, that they are abandoned. With Him who always lives it will be as easy to accomplish them at a far distant period as now. If it is his pleasure to accomplish them in a single day, he can do it; if he chooses that the execution shall be deferred to a thousand years, or that a thousand years shall be consumed in executing them, he has power to carry them onward through what seems to us to be so vast a duration. The

wicked, therefore, cannot infer that they will escape because their punishment is delayed; nor should the righteous fear that the Divine promises will fail because ages pass away before they are accomplished. The expression here used, that 'one day is with the Lord as a thousand years,' &c., is common in the Rabbinical writings. See Wetstein *in loc.* A similar thought occurs in Psa. xc. 4: 'For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.'

9. *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise.* That is, it should not be inferred because his promise seems to be long delayed that therefore it will fail. When men, after a considerable lapse of time, fail to fulfil their engagements, we infer that it is because they have changed their plans, or because they have forgotten their promises, or because they have no ability to perform them, or because there is a want of principle which makes them regardless of their obligations. But no such inference can be drawn from the apparent delay of the fulfilment of the Divine purposes. Whatever may be the reasons why they seem to be deferred, we may be sure that it is from no such causes as these. ¶ *As some men count slackness.* It is probable that the apostle here had his eye on some professing Christians who had become disheartened and impatient, and who, from the delay in regard to the coming of the Lord Jesus, and from the representations of those who denied the truth of the Christian religion, arguing from that delay that it was false, began to fear that his promised coming would indeed never occur. To such he says that it should not be inferred from his delay that he would not return, but that the delay should be regarded as an evidence of his desire that men should have space for repentance, and an opportunity to secure their salvation. See

Notes on ver. 15. ¶ *But is long-suffering to us-ward.* Toward us. The delay should be regarded as a proof of his forbearance, and of his desire that men should be saved. Every sinner should consider the fact that he is not cut down in his sins, not as a proof that God will not punish the wicked, but as a demonstration that he is now forbearing, and is willing that he should have an ample opportunity to obtain eternal life. No man should infer that God will not execute his threatenings, unless he can look into the most distant parts of a coming eternity, and demonstrate that there is no suffering appointed for the sinner there; any man who sins, and who is spared even for a moment, should regard the respite as a proof that God is merciful and forbearing now. ¶ *Not willing that any should perish.* That is, he does not desire it or wish it. His nature is benevolent, and he sincerely desires the eternal happiness of all, and his patience towards sinners proves that he is willing that they should be saved. If he were not willing, it would be easy for him to cut them off, and exclude them from hope at once. This passage, however, should not be adduced to prove (1) that sinners never *will* in fact perish; for (a) the passage does not refer to what God will do as the final Judge of mankind, but to what are his feelings and desires now towards men. (b) One may have a sincere desire that others should not perish, and yet it may be that, in entire consistency with that, they will perish. A parent has a sincere *wish* that his children should not be punished, and yet he himself may be under a moral necessity to punish them. A lawgiver may have a sincere wish that no one should ever break the laws, or be punished, and yet he himself may build a prison, and construct a gallows, and cause the law to be executed in a most rigorous manner. A judge on the bench may have a sincere desire that no man should be executed, and that every one arraigned before him should be found to be innocent, and yet even he, in entire accordance with that wish, and with a most benevolent heart, even with tears in his eyes, may pronounce the sentence of the law. (c) It cannot be inferred that all that the heart of

infinite benevolence would desire will be accomplished by his mere *will*. It is evidently as much in accordance with the benevolence of God that no man should be miserable in this world, as it is that no one should suffer in the next, since the difficulty is not in the question *where* one shall suffer, but in the fact itself that *any* should suffer; and it is just as much in accordance with his nature that all should be happy *here*, as that they should be happy *hereafter*. And yet no man can maintain that the fact that God is benevolent proves that no one will suffer here. As little will that fact prove that none will suffer in the world to come. (2.) The passage should not be adduced to prove that God has no *purpose*, and has formed no *plan*, in regard to the destruction of the wicked; for (a) the word here used has reference rather to his disposition, or to his nature, than to any act or plan. (b) There is a sense, as is admitted by all, in which he does will the destruction of the wicked—to wit, if they do not repent—that is, if they deserve it. (c) Such an act is as inconsistent with his general benevolence as an eternal purpose in the matter, since his eternal purpose can only have been to do what he actually does; and if it be consistent with a sincere desire that sinners should be saved to *do* this, then it is consistent to *determine* beforehand to do it—for to determine beforehand to do what is in fact right, cannot but be a lovely trait in the character of any one. (3.) The passage then proves (a) that God has a sincere *desire* that men should be saved; (b) that any purpose in regard to the destruction of sinners is not founded on mere will, or is not arbitrary; (c) that it would be agreeable to the nature of God, and to his arrangements in the plan of salvation, if all men should come to repentance, and accept the offers of mercy; (d) that if any come to him truly penitent, and desirous to be saved, they will not be cast off; (e) that, since it is in accordance with his nature that he should desire that all men may be saved, it may be presumed that he has made an arrangement by which it is possible that they should be; and (f) that, since this is his desire, it is proper for the ministers of religion to

10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief ^a in the night ; in the which the heavens ^b shall pass away with a great noise, and the

elements shall melt with fervent heat: the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up.

^a Mat. 24.42, 43; Ro. 16.15.

^b Ps. 102.26; Is. 51.6; Ro. 20.11.

offer salvation to every human being. Comp. Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

10. *But the day of the Lord.* The day of the Lord Jesus. That is, the day in which he will be manifested. It is called *his* day, because he will then be the grand and prominent object as the Judge of all. Comp. Luke xvii. 27. ¶ *Will come as a thief in the night.* Unexpectedly; suddenly. See Notes, 1 Thess. v. 2. ¶ *In the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise.* That is, what seems to us to be the heavens. It cannot mean that the holy abode where God dwells will pass away; nor need we suppose that this declaration extends to the starry worlds and systems as disclosed by the modern astronomy. The word is doubtless used in a popular sense—that is, as things appear to us; and the *fair* interpretation of the passage would demand only such a change as would occur by the destruction of this world by fire. If a conflagration should take place, embracing the earth and its surrounding atmosphere, all the phenomena would occur which are here described; and, if this would be so, then this is all that can be proved to be meant by the passage. Such a destruction of the elements could not occur without ‘a great noise.’ ¶ *And the elements shall melt with fervent heat.* Gr., ‘the elements being burned, or burning, (*καυρούμενα*,) shall be dissolved.’ The idea is, that the *cause* of their being ‘dissolved’ shall be fire; or that there will be a conflagration extending to what are here called the ‘elements,’ that shall produce the effects here described by the word ‘dissolved.’ There has been much difference of opinion in regard to the meaning of the word here rendered *elements*, (*στοιχεῖα*.) The word occurs in the New Testament only in the following places: Gal. iv. 3, 9; 2 Pet. iii. 10, 12, in which it is rendered *elements*; Col. ii. 8, 20, in which it is rendered *rudiments*; and in Heb. v. 12, where it is rendered *principles*. For the general meaning of the word,

see Notes, Gal. iv. 3. The word denotes the *rudiments* of anything; the minute parts or portions of which anything is composed, or which constitutes the simple portions out of which anything grows, or of which it is compounded. Here it would properly denote the component parts of the material world; or those which enter into its composition, and of which it is made up. It is not to be supposed that the apostle used the term with the same exact signification with which a chemist would use it now, but in accordance with the popular use of the term in his day. In all ages, and in all languages, some such word, with more or less of scientific accuracy, has been employed to denote the primary materials out of which others were formed, just as, in most languages, there have been characters or letters to denote the elementary sounds of which language is composed. The ancients in general supposed that the elements out of which all things were formed were four—air, earth, fire, and water. Modern science has entirely overturned this theory, and has shown that these, so far from being simple elements, are themselves compounds; but the tendency of modern science is still to show that the elements of all things are in fact few in number. The word, as here used by Peter, would refer to the elements of things as then understood in a popular sense; it would now not be an improper word to be applied to the few elements of which all things are composed, as disclosed by modern chemistry. In either case the use of the word would be correct. Whether applied to the one or the other, science has shown that all are capable of combustion. Water, in its component parts, is inflammable in a high degree; and even the diamond has been shown to be combustible. The idea contained in the word ‘dissolved,’ is, properly, only the change which *heat* produces. Heat changes the *forms* of things; dissolves them into their elements; dissipates those which were solid by driving

them off into gases, and produces new compounds, but it *annihilates* nothing. It could not be demonstrated from this phrase that the world would be annihilated by fire; it could be proved only that it will undergo important changes. So far as the action of fire is concerned, the *form* of the earth may pass away, and its aspect be changed; but unless the direct power which created it interposes to annihilate it, the *matter* which now composes it will still be in existence. ¶ *The earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up.* That is, whether they are the works of God or man—the whole vegetable and animal creation, and all the towers, the towns, the palaces, the productions of genius, the paintings, the statuary, the books, which man has made.

“The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
And all that it inherits, shall dissolve,
And, like the baseless fabric of a vision,
Leave not one wreck behind.”

The word rendered ‘burned up,’ like the word just before used and rendered *fervent heat*—a word of the same origin, but here *intensive*—means that they will undergo such a change as fire will produce; not, necessarily, that the matter composing them will be annihilated. If the matter composing the earth is ever to be destroyed entirely, it must be by the immediate power of God, for only He who created can destroy. There is not the least evidence that a particle of matter originally made has been *annihilated* since the world began; and there are no fires so intense, no chemical powers so mighty, as to cause a particle of matter to cease wholly to be. So far as the power of man is concerned, and so far as one portion of matter can prey on another, matter is as imperishable as mind, and neither can be destroyed unless God destroys it. Whether it is his purpose to *annihilate* any portion of the matter which he has made, does not appear from his word; but it is clear that he intends that the universe shall undergo important *changes*. As to the possibility or probability of such a destruction by fire as is here predicted, no one can have any doubt who is acquainted with the disclosures of modern science in regard to the internal struc-

ture of the earth. Even the ancient philosophers, from some cause, supposed that the earth would yet be destroyed by fire, (Notes, ver. 7;) and modern science has made it probable that the interior of the earth is a melted and intensely heated mass of burning materials; that the habitable world is but a comparatively thin crust or shell over those internal fires; that earthquakes are caused by the vapours engendered by that heated mass when water comes in contact with it; and that volcanoes are but openings and vent-holes through which those internal flames make their way to the surface. Whether these fires will everywhere make their way to the surface, and produce an universal conflagration, perhaps could not be determined by science; but no one can doubt that the simple command of God would be all that is necessary to pour those burning floods over the earth, as he once caused the waters to roll over every mountain and through every valley. As to the question whether it is probable that such a change produced by fire, and bringing the present order of things to a close, will occur, it may be remarked farther, that there is reason to believe that such changes are in fact taking place in other worlds. ‘During the last two or three centuries, upwards of thirteen fixed stars have disappeared. One of them, situated in the northern hemisphere, presented a peculiar brilliancy, and was so bright as to be seen by the naked eye at mid-day. It seemed to be on fire, appearing at first of a dazzling white, then of a reddish yellow, and lastly of an ashy pale colour. La Place supposes that it was burned up, as it has never been seen since. The conflagration was visible about sixteen months.’ The well-known astronomer, Von Littrow, in the section of his work on ‘New and Missing Stars,’ (entitled *Die Wunder der Himmels oder Gemein-fassliche Darstellung der Weltsystems*, Stuttgart, 1843, § 227,) observes: ‘Great as may be the revolutions which take place on the surface of those fixed stars, which are subject to this alternation of light, what entirely different changes may those others have experienced, which in regions of the firmament where no star had ever been lo-

11 *Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness;*

12 *Looking for ^a and ¹hasting*

^a Tit. 2.13.

¹ Or, *hasting the coming.*

fore, appeared to blaze up in clear flames, and then to disappear, perhaps for ever.' He then gives a brief history of those stars which have excited the particular attention of astronomers. 'In the year 1572, on the 11th of November,' says he, 'Tycho, on passing from his chemical laboratory to the observatory, through the court of his house, observed in the constellation Cassiopeia, at a place where before he had only seen very small stars, a new star of uncommon magnitude. It was so bright that it surpassed even Jupiter and Venus in splendour, and was visible even in the day-time. During the whole time in which it was visible, Tycho could observe no parallax or change of position. At the end of the year, however, it gradually diminished; and at length, in March 1574, sixteen months after its discovery, entirely disappeared, since which all traces of it have been lost. When it first appeared, its light was of a dazzling white colour; in January 1573, two months after its reviving, it became yellowish; in a few months it assumed a reddish hue, like Mars or Aldebaran; and in the beginning of the year 1574, two or three months before its total disappearance, it glimmered only with a gray or lead-coloured light, similar to that of Saturn.' See *Bibliotheca Sacra*, III., p. 181. If such things occur in other worlds, there is nothing improbable or absurd in the supposition that they may yet occur on the earth.

11. *Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved.* Since this is an undoubted truth. ¶ *What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness.* In holy conduct and piety. That is, this fact ought to be allowed to exert a deep and abiding influence on us, to induce us to lead holy lives. We should feel that there is nothing permanent on the earth; that this is not our abiding home; and that our great interests are in another world. We should be serious, humble,

unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt ^b with fervent heat?

13 *Nevertheless we, according to*

^b Is. 34.4, Mic. 1.4.

and prayerful; and should make it our great object to be prepared for the solemn scenes through which we are soon to pass. An habitual contemplation of the truth, that all that we see is soon to pass away, would produce a most salutary effect on the mind. It would make us serious. It would repress ambition. It would lead us not to desire to accumulate what must so soon be destroyed. It would prompt us to lay up our treasures in heaven. It would cause us to ask with deep earnestness whether we are prepared for these amazing scenes, should they suddenly burst upon us.

12. *Looking for.* Not knowing when this may occur, the mind should be in that state which constitutes *expectation*; that is, a belief that it will occur, and a condition of mind in which we would not be taken by surprise should it happen at any moment. See Notes, Titus ii. 13. ¶ *And hastening unto the coming.* Marg., as in Greek, '*hasting the coming.*' The Greek word rendered *hasting*, (*σπεύδω*), means to urge on, to hasten; and then to hasten after anything, to await with eager desire. This is evidently the sense here.—*Weststein and Robinson.* The state of mind which is indicated by the word is that when we are anxiously desirous that anything should occur, and when we would hasten or accelerate it if we could. The true Christian does not dread the coming of that day. He looks forward to it as the period of his redemption, and would welcome, at any time, the return of his Lord and Saviour. While he is willing to wait as long as it shall please God for the advent of his Redeemer, yet to him the brightest prospect in the future is that hour when he shall come to take him to himself. ¶ *The coming of the day of God.* Called 'the day of God,' because God will then be manifested in his power and glory.

13. *Nevertheless we, according to his promise.* The allusion here seems to

his promise, look for new ^a heavens

^a Ro. 21.1, 27.

and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

be, beyond a doubt, to two passages in Isaiah, in which a promise of this kind is found. Isa. lxxv. 17: 'For, behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.' Isa. lxxvi. 22: 'For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord,' &c. Comp. Rev. xxi. 1, where John says he had a vision of the new heaven and the new earth which was promised: 'And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea.' See Notes, Isa. lxxv. 17. ¶ *Look for new heavens and a new earth.* It may not be easy to answer many of the questions which might be asked respecting the 'new heaven and earth' here mentioned. One of those which are most naturally asked is, whether the apostle meant to say that this earth, after being purified by fire, would be fitted up again for the abode of the redeemed; but this question it is impossible to answer with certainty. The following remarks may perhaps embrace all that is known, or that can be shown to be probable, on the meaning of the passage before us. I. The 'new heavens and the new earth' referred to will be such as will exist *after* the world shall have been destroyed by fire; that is, *after* the general judgment. There is not a word expressed, and not a hint given, of any 'new heaven and earth' *previous* to this, in which the Saviour will reign personally over his saints, in such a renovated world, through a long millennial period. The *order* of events stated by Peter, is (a) that the heavens and earth which are now, are 'kept in store, reserved unto fire *against the day of judgment*, and perdition of ungodly men,' ver. 7; (b) that the day of the Lord will come suddenly and unexpectedly, ver. 10; that *then* the heavens and earth will pass away with a great noise, the elements will melt, and the earth with all its works be burned up, ver. 10; and (c) that *after* this (ver. 13) we are to expect the 'new heavens and

new earth.' Nothing is said of a personal reign of Christ; nothing of the resurrection of the saints to dwell with him on the earth; nothing of the world's being fitted up for their abode *previous* to the final judgment. If Peter had any knowledge of such events, and believed that they would occur, it is remarkable that he did not even allude to them here. The passage before us is one of the very few places in the New Testament where allusion is made to the manner in which the affairs of the world will be closed; and it cannot be explained why, if he looked for such a glorious personal reign of the Saviour, the subject should have been passed over in total silence. II. The word 'new,' applied to the heavens and the earth that are to succeed the present, might express one of the following three things—that is, either of these things would correspond with all that is fairly implied in that word: (a) If a new world was literally created out of nothing after this world is destroyed; for that would be in the strictest sense *new*. That such an event is possible no one can doubt, though it is not revealed. (b) If an inhabitant of the earth should dwell after death on any other of the worlds now existing, it would be to him a 'new' abode, and everything would appear new. Let him, for instance, be removed to the planet *Saturn*, with its wonderful ring, and its seven moons, and the whole aspect of the heavens, and of the world on which he would then dwell, would be *new* to him. The same thing would occur if he were to dwell on any other of the heavenly bodies, or if he were to pass from world to world. See this illustrated at length in the works of Thomas Dick, LL.D.—'Celestial Scenery,' &c. Comp. Notes, 1 Pet. i. 12. (c) If the earth should be renovated, and fitted up for the abode of man *after* the universal conflagration, it would then be a new abode. III. This world, thus renovated, may be from time to time the temporary abode of the redeemed, after the final judgment. No one can prove that this may not be,

though there is no evidence that it will be their permanent and eternal abode, or that even all the redeemed will at any one time find a home on this globe, for no one can suppose that the earth is spacious enough to furnish a dwelling-place for all the unnumbered millions that are to be saved. But that the earth *may* again be revisited from time to time by the redeemed; that in a purified and renovated form it may be *one* of the 'many mansions' which are to be fitted up for them, (John xiv. 2,) may not appear wholly improbable from the following suggestions: (1.) It seems to have been a law of the earth that in its progress it should be *prepared* at one period for the dwelling-place of a higher order of beings at another period. Thus, according to the disclosures of geology, it existed perhaps for countless ages before it was fitted to be an abode for man; and that it was occupied by the monsters of an inferior order of existence, who have now passed away to make room for a nobler race. Who can tell but the present order of things may pass away to make place for the manifestations of a more exalted mode of being? (2.) There is no certain evidence that any world has been *annihilated*, though some have disappeared from human view. Indeed, as observed above, (Notes, ver. 10,) there is no proof that a single particle of matter ever has been annihilated, or ever will be. It may change its form, but it may still exist. (3.) It seems also to accord most with probability, that, though the earth may undergo important changes by flood or fire, it will not be annihilated. It seems difficult to suppose that, as a world, it will be wholly displaced from the system of which it is now a part, or that the system itself will disappear. The earth, as one of the worlds of God, has occupied too important a position in the history of the universe to make it to be easily believed that the place where the Son of God became incarnate and died, shall be utterly swept away. It would, certainly, accord more with all the *feelings* which we can have on such a subject, to suppose that a world once so beautiful when it came from the hand of its Maker, should be restored to

primitive loveliness; that a world which seems to have been *made* primarily (see Notes, 1 Pet. i. 12) with a view to illustrate the glory of God in redemption, should be preserved in some appropriate form to be the theatre of the exhibition of the developement of that plan in far distant ages to come. (4.) To the redeemed, it would be most interesting again to visit the spot where the great work of their redemption was accomplished; where the Son of God became incarnate and made atonement for sin; and where there would be so many interesting recollections and associations, even after the purification by fire, connected with the infancy of their existence, and their preparation for eternity. Piety would at least *wish* that the world where Gethsemane and Calvary are should never be blotted out from the universe. But (5.) if, after their resurrection and reception into heaven, the redeemed shall ever revisit a world so full of interesting recollections and associations, where they began their being, where their Redeemer lived and died, where they were renewed and sanctified, and where their bodies once rested in the grave, there is no reason to suppose that this will be their permanent and unchanging abode. It may be mere speculation, but it seems to accord best with the goodness of God, and with the manner in which the universe is made, to suppose that every portion of it may be visited, and become successively the abode of the redeemed; that they may pass from world to world, and survey the wonders and the works of God as they are displayed in different worlds. The universe, so vast, seems to have been fitted up for such a purpose, and nothing else that we can conceive of will be so adapted to give employment without weariness to the minds that God has made, in the interminable duration before them. IV. The new heavens and earth will be *holy*. They will be the abode of righteousness for ever. (a) This fact is clearly revealed in the verse before us; 'wherein dwelleth righteousness.' It is also the correct statement of the Scriptures, Rev. xxi. 27; 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10; Heb. xii. 14. (b) This will be in strong contrast with what has occurred

14 Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent ^athat ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

^a 1 Co. 15. 58; 1 Th. 5. 23.

on earth. The history of this world has been almost entirely a history of *sin*—of its nature, developements, results. There have been no perfectly holy beings on the earth, except the Saviour, and the angels who have occasionally visited it. There has been no perfectly holy place—city, village, hamlet; no perfectly holy community. But the future world, in strong contrast with this, will be perfectly pure, and will be a fair illustration of what religion in its perfect form will do. (c) It is for this that the Christian desires to dwell in that world, and waits for the coming of his Saviour. It is not primarily that he may be happy, desirable as that is, but that he may be in a world where he himself will be perfectly pure, and where all around him will be pure; where every being that he meets shall be ‘holy as God is holy,’ and every place on which his eye rests, or his foot treads, shall be uncontaminated by sin. To the eye of faith and hope, how blessed is the prospect of such a world!

14. *Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent.* That is, in securing your salvation. The effect of such hopes and prospects should be to lead us to an earnest inquiry whether we are prepared to dwell in a holy world, and to make us diligent in performing the duties, and patient in bearing the trials of life. He who has such hopes set before him, should seek earnestly that he may be enabled truly to avail himself of them, and should make their attainment the great object of his life. He who is so soon to come to an end of all weary toil, should be willing to labour diligently and faithfully while life lasts. He who is so soon to be relieved from all temptation and trial, should be willing to bear a little longer the sorrows of the present world. What are all these compared with the glory that awaits us? Comp. Notes, 1 Cor. xv. 58; Rom. viii. 18, seq.; 2 Cor. iv. 16-18. ¶ *That ye may be*

15 And account *that* the long-suffering of our Lord *is* salvation; ^beven as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you;

^b Ro. 2. 4.

found of him in peace. Found by him when he returns in such a state as to secure your eternal peace. ¶ *Without spot, and blameless.* See Notes, Eph. v. 27. It should be an object of earnest effort with us to have the last stain of sin and pollution removed from our souls. A deep feeling that we are soon to stand in the presence of a holy God, our final Judge, cannot but have a happy influence in making us pure.

15. *And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation.* Regard his delay in coming to judge the world, not as an evidence that he never will come, but as a proof of his desire that we should be saved. Many had drawn a different inference from the fact that the Saviour did not return, and had supposed that it was a proof that he would never come, and that his promises had failed. Peter says that that conclusion was not authorized, but that we should rather regard it as an evidence of his mercy, and of his desire that we should be saved. This conclusion is as proper now as it was then. Wicked men should not infer, because God does not cut them down, that therefore they never will be punished, or that God is not faithful to his threatenings. They should rather regard it as a proof that he is willing to save them; for (1) he might justly cut them off for their sins; (2) the only reason of which we have knowledge why he spares the wicked is to give them space for repentance; and (3) as long as life is prolonged a sinner has the opportunity to repent, and may turn to God. We may therefore, in our own case, look on all the delays of God to punish—on all his patience and forbearance towards us, notwithstanding our sins and provocations—on the numberless tokens of his kindness scattered along our way, as evidence that he is not willing that we should perish. What an accumulated argument in any case would this afford of the willingness of God to save! Let any man look on

16 As also in all *his* epistles, ^a speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are

unlearned and unstable wrest, as *they do* also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

^a Ro. 8.19; 1 Co. 15.24; 1 Th. iv., v.; 2 Th. 1.5-10.

his own sins, his pride, and selfishness, and sensuality; let him contemplate the fact that he has sinned through many years, and against many mercies; let him endeavour to estimate the number and magnitude of his offences, and upon God's patience in bearing with him while these have been committed, and who can overrate the force of such an argument in proof that God is slow to anger, and is willing to save? Comp. Notes, Rom. ii. 4. ¶ *Even as our beloved brother Paul also.* From this reference to Paul the following things are clear: (1) that Peter was acquainted with his writings; (2) that he presumed that those to whom he wrote were also acquainted with them; (3) that Peter regarded Paul as a 'beloved brother,' notwithstanding the solemn rebuke which Paul had had occasion to administer to him, Gal. ii. 2, seq.; (4) that he regarded him as authority in inculcating the doctrines and duties of religion; and (5) that he regarded him as an inspired man, and his writings as a part of Divine truth. See Notes, ver. 16. That Peter has shown in his epistles that he was acquainted with the writings of Paul, has been abundantly proved by Eichhorn, (*Einleitung in das N. Tes.* viii. 606, seq.) and will be apparent by a comparison of the following passages: Eph. i. 3, with 1 Pet. iii. 1; Col. iii. 8, with 1 Pet. ii. 1; Eph. v. 22, with 1 Pet. iii. 1; Eph. v. 21, with 1 Pet. v. 5; 1 Thess. v. 6, with 1 Pet. v. 8; 1 Cor. xvi. 20, with 1 Pet. v. 14; Rom. viii. 18, with 1 Pet. v. 1; Rom. iv. 24, with 1 Pet. i. 21; Rom. xiii. 1, 3, 4, with 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14; 1 Tim. ii. 9, with 1 Pet. iii. 3; 1 Tim. v. 5, with 1 Pet. iii. 5. The writings of the apostles were doubtless extensively circulated; and one apostle, though himself inspired, could not but feel a deep interest in the writings of another. There would be cases also, as in the instance before us, in which one would wish to confirm his own sentiments by the acknowledged wisdom, experience,

and authority of another. ¶ *According to the wisdom given unto him.* Peter evidently did not mean to disparage that wisdom, or to express a doubt that Paul was endowed with wisdom; he meant undoubtedly that, in regard to Paul, the same thing was true which he would have affirmed of himself or of any other man, that whatever wisdom he had was to be traced to a higher than human origin. This would at the same time tend to secure more respect for the opinion of Paul than if he had said it was his own, and would keep up in the minds of those to whom he wrote a sense of the truth that *all* wisdom is from above. In reference to ourselves, to our friends, to our teachers, and to all men, it is proper to bear in remembrance the fact that *all* true wisdom is from the 'Father of lights.' Comp. Notes, James i. 5, 17. ¶ *Hath written unto you.* It is not necessary to suppose that Paul had written any epistles addressed specifically, and by name, to the persons to whom Peter wrote. It is rather to be supposed that the persons to whom Peter wrote (1 Pet. i. 1) lived in the regions to which some of Paul's epistles were addressed, and that they might be regarded as addressed to them. The epistles to the Galatians, Ephesians, and Colossians were of this description, all addressed to churches in Asia Minor, and all, therefore, having reference to the same people to whom Peter addressed his epistles.

16. *As also in all his epistles.* Not only in those which he addressed to the churches in Asia Minor, but in his epistles generally. It is to be presumed that they might have had an acquaintance with some of the other epistles of Paul, as well as those sent to the churches in their immediate vicinity. ¶ *Speaking in them of these things.* The things which Peter had dwelt upon in his two epistles. The great doctrines of the cross; of the depravity of man; of the Divine purposes; of the new birth; of the consummation of all things;

of the return of the Saviour to judge the world, and to receive his people to himself; the duty of a serious, devout, and prayerful life, and of being prepared for the heavenly world. These things are constantly dwelt upon by Paul, and to his authority in these respects Peter might appeal with the utmost confidence. ¶ *In which.* The common reading in this passage is *in his*, and according to this the reference is to the *subjects* treated of—'in which things'—referring to what he had just spoken of—'speaking of these things.' This reading is found in the common editions of the New Testament, and is supported by far the greater number of mss., and by most commentators and critics. It is found in Griesbach, Tittman, and Hahn, and has every evidence of being the genuine reading. Another reading, however, (*in alijs*), is found in some valuable mss., and is supported by the Syriac and Arabic versions, and adopted by Mill, (Proleg. 1484,) and by Beza. According to this, the reference is to the *epistles* themselves—as would seem to be implied in our common version. The true construction, so far as the evidence goes, is to refer it not directly to the *epistles*, but to the *things* of which Peter says Paul wrote; that is, not to the style and language of Paul, but to the great truths and doctrines which he taught. Those doctrines were indeed contained in his epistles, but still, according to the fair construction of the passage before us, Peter should not be understood as accusing Paul of obscurity of *style*. He refers not to the difficulty of understanding what Paul *meant*, but to the difficulty of comprehending the *great truths* which he taught. This is, generally, the greatest difficulty in regard to the statements of Paul. The difficulty is not that the meaning of the writer is not plain, but it is either (a) that the mind is overpowered by the grandeur of the thought, and the incomprehensible nature of the theme, or (b) that the truth is so unpalatable, and the mind is so prejudiced against it, that we are *unwilling* to receive it. Many a man knows well enough what Paul means, and would receive his doctrines without hesitation if the heart was not opposed to it; and in this state

of mind Paul is charged with obscurity, when the real difficulty lies only in the *heart* of him who makes the complaint. If this be the true interpretation of this passage, then it should not be adduced to prove that Paul is an obscure writer, whatever may be true on that point. There *are*, undoubtedly, obscure things in his writings, as there are in all other ancient compositions, but this passage should not be adduced to prove that he had not the faculty of making himself understood. An honest heart, a willingness to receive the truth, is one of the best qualifications for understanding the writings of Paul; and when this exists, no one will fail to find truth that may be comprehended, and that will be eminently adapted to sanctify and save the soul. ¶ *Are some things hard to be understood.* Things pertaining to high and difficult subjects, and which are not easy to be comprehended. Peter does not call in question the truth of what Paul had written; he does not intimate that he himself would differ from him. His language is rather that which a man would use who regarded the writings to which he referred as true, and what he says here is an honourable testimony to the authority of Paul. It may be added, (1.) that Peter does not say that *all* the doctrines of the Bible, or even *all* the doctrines of Paul, are hard to be understood, or that nothing is plain. (2.) He says nothing about withholding the Bible, or even the writings of Paul, from the mass of Christians, on the ground of the difficulty of understanding the Scriptures; nor does he intimate that that was the design of the Author of the Bible. (3.) It is perfectly manifest, from this very passage, that the writings of Paul were in fact in the hands of the people, else how could they wrest and pervert them? (4.) Peter says nothing about an infallible interpreter of any kind, nor does he intimate that either he or his 'successors' were authorized to interpret them for the church. (5.) With what propriety can the *pretended* successor of Peter—the pope—undertake to expound those difficult doctrines in the writings of Paul, when even Peter himself did not undertake it, and when he did not profess to be able to comprehend them?

Is the pope more skilled in the knowledge of divine things than the apostle Peter? Is he better qualified to interpret the sacred writings than an inspired apostle was? (6.) Those portions of the writings of Paul, for anything that appears to the contrary, are just as 'hard to be understood' now, as they were before the 'infallible' church undertook to explain them. The world is little indebted to any claims of infallibility in explaining the meaning of the oracles of God. It remains yet to be seen that any portion of the Bible has been made clearer by *any* mere authoritative explanation. And (7.) it should be added, that without any such exposition, the humble inquirer after truth may find enough in the Bible to guide his feet in the paths of salvation. No one ever approached the sacred Scriptures with a teachable heart, who did not find them 'able to make him wise unto salvation.' Comp. Notes on 2 Tim. iii. 15. ¶ *Which they that are unlearned.* The evil here adverted to is that which arises in cases where those without competent knowledge undertake to become expounders of the word of God. It is not said that it is not proper for them to attempt to become instructed by the aid of the sacred writings; but the danger is, that without proper views of interpretation, of language, and of ancient customs, they might be in danger of perverting and abusing certain portions of the writings of Paul. Intelligence among the people is everywhere in the Bible presumed to be proper in understanding the sacred Scriptures; and ignorance may produce the same effects in interpreting the Bible which it will produce in interpreting other writings. Every good thing is liable to abuse; but the proper way to correct this evil, and to remove this danger, is not to *keep* the people in ignorance, or to appoint some one to be an infallible interpreter; it is to remove the ignorance itself by enlightening the people, and rendering them better qualified to understand the sacred oracles. The way to remove error is not to perpetuate ignorance; it is to enlighten the mind, so that it may be qualified to appreciate the truth. ¶ *And unstable.* Who have no settled principles and views. The evil here

adverted to is that which arises where those undertake to interpret the Bible who have no established principles. They regard nothing as settled. They have no landmarks set up to guide their inquiries. They have no stability in their character, and of course nothing can be regarded as settled in their methods of interpreting the Bible. They are under the control of feeling and emotion, and are liable to embrace one opinion to-day, and another directly opposite to-morrow. But the way to prevent *this* evil is not by attempting to give to a community an authoritative interpretation of the Bible; it is to diffuse abroad just principles, that men may obtain from the Bible an intelligent view of what it means. ¶ *Wrest.* Pervert—σπριβλῶσιν. The word here used occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is derived from a word meaning a windlass, winch, instrument of torture, (σπριβλά,) and means to roll or wind on a windlass; then to wrench, or turn away, as by the force of a windlass; and then to wrest or pervert. It implies a turning out of the way by the application of force. Here the meaning is, that they apply those portions of the Bible to a purpose for which they were never intended. It is doubtless true that this may occur. Men may abuse and pervert anything that is good. But the way to prevent this is not to set up a pretended infallible interpreter. With all the perversities arising from ignorance in the interpretation of the Bible; in all the crude, and weak, and fanciful expositions which could be found among those who have interpreted the Scriptures for themselves—and they are many—if they were all collected together, there would not be found so many adapted to corrupt and ruin the soul, as have come from the interpretations attempted to be palmed upon the world by the one church that claims to be the infallible expounder of the word of God. ¶ *As they do also the other scriptures.* This is an unequivocal declaration of Peter that he regarded the writings of Paul as a part of the holy Scriptures, and of course that he considered him as inspired. The word 'Scriptures,' as used by a Jew, had a technical signification—meaning the in-

17 Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know *these things* before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.

^a Col. 1.10.

spired writings, and was the common word which was applied to the sacred writings of the Old Testament. As Peter uses this language, it implies that he regarded the writings of Paul as on a level with the Old Testament; and as far as the testimony of one apostle can go to confirm the claim of another to inspiration, it proves that the writings of Paul are entitled to a place in the sacred canon. It should be remarked, also, that Peter evidently speaks here of the *common estimate* in which the writings of Paul were held. He addresses those to whom he wrote, not in such a way as to declare to them that the writings of Paul were to be regarded as a part of the inspired volume, but as if this were already known, and were an admitted point. ¶ *Unto their own destruction.* By embracing false doctrines. Error destroys the soul; and it is very possible for a man so to read the Bible as only to confirm himself in error. He may find passages which, by a perverted interpretation, shall seem to sustain his own views; and, instead of embracing the truth, may live always under delusion, and perish at last. It is not to be inferred that every man who reads the Bible, or even every one who undertakes to be its public expounder, will certainly be saved.

17. *Seeing that ye know these things before.* Being aware of this danger, and knowing that such results may follow. Men should read the Bible with the feeling that it is *possible* that they may fall into error, and be deceived at last. This apprehension will do much to make them diligent, and candid, and prayerful, in studying the word of God. ¶ *With the error of the wicked.* Wicked men. Such as he had referred to in chap. ii., who became public teachers of religion. ¶ *Fall from your own steadfastness.* Your firm adherence to the truth. The particular danger here referred to is not that of falling from grace, or from true religion, but from

18 But grow ^ain grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him ^bbe glory, both now and for ever Amen.

^b 2 Ti. 4.18.

the firm and settled principles of religious truth into error.

18. *But grow in grace.* Comp. Col. i. 10. Religion in general is often represented as *grace*, since every part of it is the result of grace, or of unmerited favour; and to 'grow in grace' is to increase in that which constitutes true religion. Religion is as susceptible of cultivation and of growth as any other virtue of the soul. It is feeble in its beginnings, like the grain of mustard seed, or like the germ or blade of the plant, and it increases as it is cultivated. There is no piety in the world which is not the result of cultivation, and which cannot be measured by the degree of care and attention bestowed upon it. No one becomes eminently pious, any more than one becomes eminently learned or rich, who does not intend to; and ordinarily men in religion are what they design to be. They have about as much religion as they wish, and possess about the character which they intend to possess. When men reach extraordinary elevations in religion, like Baxter, Payson, and Edwards, they have gained only what they *meant* to gain; and the gay and worldly professors of religion, who have little comfort and peace, have in fact the characters which they designed to have. If these things are so, then we may see the propriety of the injunction 'to grow in grace;' and then too we may see the reason why so feeble attainments are made in piety by the great mass of those who profess religion. ¶ *And in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* See Notes, John xvii. 3. Comp. Notes on Col. i. 10. To know the Lord Jesus Christ—to possess just views of his person, character, and work—is the sum and essence of the Christian religion; and with this injunction, therefore, the apostle appropriately closes this epistle. He who has a saving knowledge of Christ, has in fact all that is essential to his welfare in the

life that is, and in that which is to come; he who has not this knowledge, though he may be distinguished in the learning of the schools, and may be profoundly skilled in the sciences, has in reality no knowledge that will avail him in the great matters pertaining to his eternal welfare. ¶ *To him be glory, &c.* Comp. Notes, Rom. xvi. 27; 2 Tim. iv.

18. With the desire that honour and glory should be rendered to the Redeemer, all the aspirations of true Christians appropriately close. There is no wish more deeply cherished in their hearts than this; there is nothing that will enter more into their worship in heaven. Compare Rev. i. 5. 6; v. 12, 13.